# BING

Winter
2017

No. 177

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

# THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

***Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records***

**OUR MISSION:** To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations


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**Other Correspondence** concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.


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# EDITORIAL

Well, we made a fair bit of noise about the 40th anniversary of Bing's passing! We hit Facebook hard and Lachlan McLean did a great job on "Bing Constantly" on Twitter. Lachlan also put together a press release on behalf of the ICC which was sent to press agencies worldwide and as many newspapers we could find. I bombarded UK radio stations with emails, and Wig and many others of you contacted your local radio stations. The most welcome announcement by the Crosby family of two new CDs was perfectly timed too.

The results of all this activity was very rewarding. The BBC broadcast an hour-long tribute which Ken Crossland reviews in his *Crosbyana* article and many other UK radio presenters highlighted the event with special shows and by playing Crosby records. Full details in *Bing on the Box*.

Jason Liddiard organized a Crosby get-together for October 14 in the UK and in the USA, Martin McQuade presented "Bing Crosby's Hit Parade" in Brooklyn whilst Ron Field put on a special film show in Morton, Washington. Arne Fogel, Greg Van Beek, Rob Bamberger and Jack Boyle had radio tributes too.

Affiniti Music, a Classical Crossover group toured Ireland and presented *Hollywood Salutes Bing Crosby* at several locations. All in all, it was an excellent outcome and thank you to all of you who played a part.

This magazine is packed with a wide variety of articles which I hope will merit your approval and I thank all the contributors for their hard work. We have paid a little extra in order to have colour throughout in this issue and please let us know if you would like it to continue. Our covers this time have been supplied by long-term member Arthur Blood (who will be 93 in December) and they fit in nicely with the season. No prizes for guessing which film they come from.

The ICC management team have really appreciated your support and encouragement during 2017. It would greatly help us though if you could pay your dues/subscriptions before Christmas Day to save Wig and Michael having to follow up with letters.

I wish you all the very best for Christmas and the New Year.

**Malcolm Macfarlane** macwilmslo@aol.com

On this side of the pond, very little effort was made by the mainstream media to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Bing's passing, which stands in sad, stark contrast with the efforts made earlier in the summer on behalf of Elvis Presley. Fortunately, as Malcolm points out, ICC members and Crosby fans alike did their part all over the world to remember Bing and honor his musical and cultural legacy on such an important occasion. In addition to the events that have already taken place, there are some still to come, like a showing of *White Christmas* preceded by a brief lecture

spotlighting Bing's achievements that I am organizing at the public library in Martin, Tennessee, in early December. I would like to thank everyone who has put together any sort of tribute to Bing this year, or anyone who spent October 14 listening to his music or watching his movies. They say that a person is not truly dead as long as he or she lives on in people's thoughts and memories, and in Bing's case that remains undoubtedly true.

As Malcolm also notes, we should all be thankful and feeling great anticipation about the two new CDs that Bing Crosby Enterprises has slated for release and that will be out shortly—a remastered and properly annotated reissue of *New Tricks* and a new compilation of rarities and unreleased material to be titled *Among My Souvenirs: More Treasures from the Crosby Archive*, the latter a two-disc set. These will definitely be the two holiday gifts that I will be looking forward to the most! See *Keeping Track* for more information.

Finally, I would like to thank Wig Wiggins for suggesting, over the course of a recent phone conversation, that I write a piece about *A Time to Be Jolly*, one of Bing's lesser-known Christmas outings from the early 1970s. I originally had a different idea for my contribution to this very special issue, but Wig's suggestion works much better in the context of a magazine that members will be receiving as the Yuletide approaches. Readers will find the article in subsequent pages, but from the outset I want to show my appreciation for all the help that Wig provided while I was doing the research for the piece.

And as the colder weather starts to approach my small town in northwest Tennessee, where some of Bing's classic seasonal recordings are beginning to be heard here and there, I simply would like to wish all ICC members a merry holiday season and a happy New Year full of everything Crosby.

**AntonGarcia-Fernandez** antongarciafdez@gmail.com

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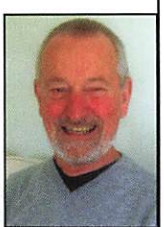
## SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT



In this winter edition of BING there will be much to celebrate as you learn about the fine tributes that various radio stations and individuals have featured covering the 40th anniversary of Bing's passing. All of you will have a memory of how you heard the sad news about Bing's demise and how you reacted. In my case I was at home and preparing for the annual Bing tribute in Leeds and I had to decide if the meeting would be held given the sad news. After consultation with club officers we decided that 'the show would go on'. Happily, and despite the sombre mood we managed to hold a successful meeting. The press and TV stations were interested and many mentioned our annual tribute to Bing.

Whilst on the subject of anniversaries I am very pleased to relate that December 2017 is the 60th anniversary of my joining what was then the British Crosby Society. It doesn't seem possible that 60 years have gone by since I was welcomed into the club by the then Co-President - Dot Hardiman.

Looking through the UK files I believe that there are five others who were members then and who remain members today. These members are Stan White, Reg Davis, John Fahy, Johnny Joyce and Geoff Milne. If there are any other members who I have missed then please let me know and I will mention your names in the next issue of BING.

60 years provides a kaleidoscope of memories, too many to recount here, but a few outstanding recollections come to mind, namely – meeting Bing at Cockermouth in 1966, seeing Bing at Wembley in 1961, being in the audience for Bing's Palladium and Usher Hall concerts and most importantly remembering all the wonderful friendships established with Crosby enthusiasts the world over. I was pleased to associate with late members, Les Gaylor, Ralph Harding, Fred Reynolds, Les Phythian, Bob Roberts, Charlie Tupper, Arnold Pope, George Smith, Michael O'Toole, Frank Murphy, Reg Bristo and to share their enthusiasm for Bing's musical legacy particularly their love of Bing's recordings.

It has been, and remains a great pleasure to share my hobby with Malcolm Macfarlane, Ken Crossland, Wig Wiggins, David Currington, George O'Reilly and many others and long may this continue.

In a letter written to me in 1958, Ted Laker ended his letter by asserting that I would come to love those circular pieces of wax (Bing's 78s). How very prescient his remarks were and I recently sent him a copy of that letter which I still cherish. After 60 years I am still seeking 26 of Bing's British 78s! From 78s to MP3 files and i-Tunes it's been a wonderful journey.

Jason Liddiard's quarterly Bing Meeting is now well established and the first anniversary has been celebrated and I would like to thank Jason and Sharon for their kind hospitality and for an engaging programme.

## NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to Steven J. Feldman of Manalapan, New Jersey and I apologise for missing his name from two previous issues of the magazine. Better late than never!

## DEATHS

We are late in notifying the death of **Gordon Wall** of Adelaide in Australia who passed away in October 2016. Gordon was a celebrated Crosby collector who made available some very rare Bing recordings which found their way onto 40 LPs on the Crosbyana label. The covers were exceptional and the LPs were much sought after as only a limited number were pressed.

We are also sorry to report the loss of **Ruth Prigozy**, who organised the wonderful Hofstra

conference on Bing in 2002. She passed away on July 16 at the age of 87. During her 41 years at Hofstra, Dr. Prigozy became one of the world's leading experts on the life and work of F. Scott Fitzgerald and a scholar of popular literature and film. She directed or co-directed seven major Hofstra Cultural Center conferences – a record among the Hofstra faculty.

**BING CROSBY ON CD**

This is my usual reminder that the following single CDs remain available from me with the price for the UK being £7.50, Europe £9.50 and the rest of the world £10.50. The price for the double CD is £9.50 UK, £11.50 Ireland & Europe, £15 for rest of the world.

Members in the US and Canada should obtain their copies from Wig Wiggins and in Australia/New Zealand from David Currington.

BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS – Vols. 4, 8, 9 and 10
BING CROSBY and the Kraft Music Hall – Rare Original Survivors
THE ROAD TO HONG KONG – SAY ONE FOR ME
BING CROSBY – GOOD AND RARE VOL 3.
JOIN BING & SING ALONG (2 CD SET)

Until next spring, my warmest greetings to all members.

**Michael Crampton** mdcrampton@gmail.com

## Walking in a Warren Wonderland

The most successful composer of the 20th century in terms of chart hits was Salvatore Guaragna (1893-1981).

What? Did he really have more hits than Irving Berlin, Cole Porter and the Gershwins?

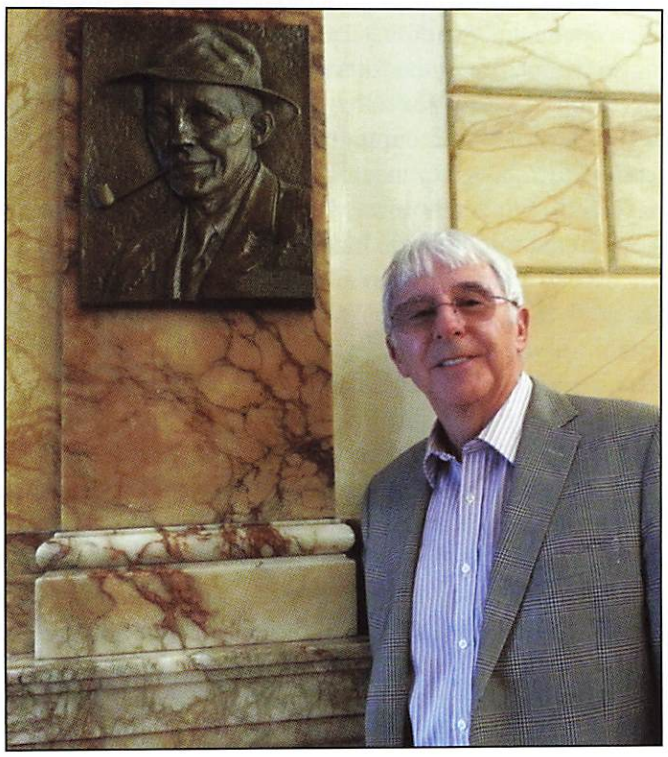
Yes! He will of course be better known to you as Harry Warren and even under that name, sadly, he is not particularly well remembered.

Bing first recorded a Warren song in 1931 ("Million Dollar Baby") and in all he recorded 29 songs by him (some more than once) ranging from "Young and Healthy", "September in the Rain" to "The Rose in Her Hair". In addition he sang at least another 19 Warren songs on radio and TV, songs such as "Shuffle Off to Buffalo", "Honolulu" and "You'll Never Know" apart from those he had also recorded. Those of you who attended the Hofstra seminar in 2002 may recall Nick Perito playing a wonderful Harry Warren medley before the banquet.

Harry Warren wrote the music for songs to be used in films with a number of lyricists whilst under contract to Warner Brothers from 1932 to 1940, 20th Century Fox (1940-1944) and then MGM. He later worked for Paramount including on Bing's film *Just for You*. Often his songs were standouts in poor and long forgotten movies. In all, he wrote the songs for 56 films with a variety of lyric writers. His songs won the Academy Award three times ("Lullaby of Broadway", "You'll Never Know" and "On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe") and he was nominated on another eight occasions.

In July, our honorary member Michael Feinstein came over to the U.K. to record a special tribute to Harry Warren for the BBC's long running and prestigious radio show "Friday Night Is Music Night" and he kindly invited your editor and my wife, Pat, to attend as his guests. We thought we'd go down to London a day earlier to see the stage musical *42nd Street* which incorporates all the Harry Warren songs from the 1933 film of the same name plus his songs from *Gold Diggers of 1933*, *Roman Scandals*, *Dames*, *Gold Diggers of 1935*, *Go into Your Dance*, *Gold Diggers of 1937* and *The Singing Marine*. The show was absolutely magnificent and I had not realised that "Shadow Waltz" (which was a huge hit for Bing in 1933) had come from *Gold Diggers of 1933*. Sheena Easton sang it in this latest production.

Our stay in London gave us time to visit the British museum, have afternoon tea at the Savoy and check in at the Palladium to make sure that Bing's plaque was still in place.



It was a little disheartening to find that every time we got on to a crowded Tube train, passengers jumped up to let us sit down. It does not seem long since I was doing the same when old people needed a seat!

Michael Feinstein's celebration of Harry Warren was recorded at the Mermaid theatre with the sixty piece BBC Concert Orchestra buttressed by the BBC Big Band and the Capital Voices. An amazing number of top musicians with Broadway maestro Larry Blank

conducting. Michael had the Olivier Award winning Rebecca Trehearn and popular cabaret artist Alison Jiear joining him in singing the songs. Michael opened with a superb Warren medley and went on to sing "You'll Never Know" using an arrangement first used by Perry Como on his radio show in 1943. Apart from many other famous Warren tunes, Michael used a little known item from *Springtime in the Rockies*, "Run Little Raindrop, Run", and Alison Jiear sang a wonderful song called "Remember My Forgotten Man" from *Gold Diggers of 1933* which I had never heard before.

All the arrangements had been provided from Michael's own collection except "At Last" which Alison Jiear supplied and sang.

Michael linked all the songs giving us background details as he went along. Bing was apparently Harry's all-round favourite singer with Dick Haymes being Warren's special choice for ballads. Mr. Warren was always annoyed that he did not get the same attention as Irving Berlin and when the news of the bombing of Berlin in WW2 reached him, he said that they had bombarded the wrong Berlin! Bing once described Warren as a genial curmudgeon but he was Mr. Crosby's choice for *Just for You* when Johnny Mercer was not available.

Not content with singing most of the songs, Michael also conducted the orchestra on a couple of tunes as well as accompanying the other singers on the piano on occasion. It was an excellent show which was broadcast a few days later. A couple of edits had to be made at the end of the show because of sound problems and it was fascinating to see how easily all concerned picked up a song in the middle and slotted everything in as required.

When the show was broadcast, the time when the interval took place was filled with Michael and Larry Blank giving details of how the show was put together and it was nice to hear a clip of Bing singing "You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby".

At the reception afterwards I had a few moments with Michael, and Pat and I congratulated him on the show. In turn, he thanked me for continuing as Editor of BING magazine saying that other similar clubs such as the Kate Smith society were having to slim down and he was pleased that we were still able to produce a first class magazine.

Michael Feinstein continues to be one of the foremost promoters of the Great American Songbook and long may he continue!

**Malcolm Macfarlane**

*(Editor: By way of an update, on July 29 at the Los Angeles County Arboretum, Michael offered a program with the theme "Swinging Songs for Lovers." Here's an extract from the review in the Pasadena Star-News.*

...There was swing music, but there was more from the Broadway stage, and as he noted early in his talks, "There are ballads that have been reinterpreted as swing music and vice versa." He then quoted composer Hugo Winterhalter, who said, "It is those different interpretations that make the music live forever."... Michael closed the first half with a generous medley of Bing Crosby songs, delivering them with refined sensitivity. There was a bit more swing music in the second half, and Feinstein even made a reasonably accurate impersonation of Louis Armstrong when he sang "Hello Dolly." As Jimmy McHugh and Harold Adamson wrote, it was, indeed, a lovely way to spend an evening.*)*

## Going My Way in Warrington

**Jason Liddiard reports on the latest get-together.**

Wow! What an absolutely fabulous time we had commemorating the anniversary of Bing's passing at our autumn meeting held on 14th October, forty years to the day after Bing's death.

**Welcome!**

Members were greeted by our opening track 'September Song' from the *Seasons* album recorded 12th September, 1977. Souvenir gifts were presented to two guests attending their first 'Going My Way' branch meeting. One of the attendees was an American friend, passing through on his way home to Kansas. So we helped remind him of home by playing Bing's 1944 hit 'On the Atcheson, Topeka and the Santa Fe'.

**News, Reviews & Radio**

We covered the announcement, made only just the day before, of two new CD releases from the Bing Crosby archive and Ume. Let's hope we have them in time for our Christmas gathering.

Malcolm Macfarlane kindly brought along CD copies of two recent radio tributes to Bing: *John Walton's Crooners Club Crosby Special*, and *Reminiscing with Bob Rogers* of Sydney radio, which were duly distributed to attendees. By coincidence, the second part of the Bob Rogers programme was being broadcast during our get-together. So we listened in on the Internet, just in time to hear 'Now You has Jazz' – what great timing!

We tapped into some of the many recent radio appearances by Bing, most notably the fabulous BBC tribute programmes hosted by Bob Roberts, Bill Rennells and Elizabeth McGovern. To demonstrate Bing's diversity and range across the decades we played some more tracks from recent radio broadcasts, amongst others 'Long Ago and Far Away' (1944), 'Time on My Hands' (1976), 'Nice Work If You Can Get It' from the 1956 Buddy Bregman album, 'Dinah' (1931), 'Send in the Clowns' (1975), 'But Beautiful' (1947) and 'Aren't You Glad You're You' (1945) a typical Bing song, if ever there was one!

As a tribute to Country singer Glen Campbell, who died 8th August we played Bing's rendition of the Glen Campbell hit 'Gentle on My Mind' from the 1972 album *Bing 'n Basie*. This was followed by a video clip from a John Wayne TV show of 1970, featuring both Glen and Bing with a myriad of other performers taking a line each of the US national anthem *God Bless America*.

**Where Were You The Day Bing Died?**

Attendees were invited to recall what they were doing when they heard the news of Bing's death, and to select a song they remembered from that time.

Yours truly kicked off the proceedings with a video clip of Bing singing 'Breezing Along with the Breeze' from the 1975 *Parkinson* TV show, which was shown as a tribute the night after Bing died. Other recollections included 'When I Leave the World Behind', 'Don't Be a Do-Badder', 'Going My Way', 'Thine Alone' and 'Come Share the Wine'. This final track was selected by debutant Mark Spry, who recounted his visit to the La Moraleja golf course near Madrid where Bing died.

**The Crosby Quiz**

Our quiz this time around was titled *All About 1977* and lead us to play 'Don't Get around Much Anymore' (Bing's first recording of 1977) and the extremely elegant and moving 'Yesterday, When I Was Young'.

We also showed video clips of Bing singing with Groucho Marx (who also died in 1977) and the hilarious duet with Pearl Bailey from the 1977 Pasadena Show.

**The newer fella with the older fellas.**

**Film/TV Show selection**

After a brief refreshment break and a photo call with my 4-month old grandson (one of the newer fellas!) we settled down to watch a compilation of Bing TV commercials from the 1950s through to the 1970s, followed by the infamous Barbara Walters interview of May 1977. After this, we watched an interesting compilation of proceedings recorded at the Hofstra event back in 2002, provided by Malcolm Macfarlane and now lodged with the 'Going My Way' branch for posterity!

Then it was time to get back to some more requests to celebrate the legacy and diversity of The Old Groaner including 'For Love Alone', 'You Keep Coming Back Like a Song', 'I'm Confessin', 'Keep Your Eyes on the Hands' and 'Quicksilver' before we finally ran out of time.

So a very special Bingfest in Winwick came to a reluctant end. I'm already looking forward to our Crosby Christmas meeting in December.

**Jason Liddiard**

*(Editor: The meeting was a marvellous injection of Crosbyana for us and many thanks to Jason and Sharon for their hospitality.)*

## New Hampshire Remembers Bing

**Hannah Sampadian writing in the *Concord Monitor* on October 11 gave details of another Crosby tribute.**

Tunes of American pop singing icon Bing Crosby will echo through theatre halls on Sunday, October 15 as "A Memoir to Bing Crosby: Celebrating an American Original" is performed at the Concord City Auditorium in New Hampshire.

Crosby, known for his warm, bass-baritone voice, was among the most popular and successful musical acts of the 20th century, having sold more than 1 billion records, tapes and CDs around the world.

Planning for the show has been in the works for more than a year, said Clayton "Skip" Poole, music director of the Capital Jazz Orchestra.

"We are doing this show on the 40th anniversary of his death and it also coincides with the 88th anniversary of his first solo recording," Poole said. "The timing of it is quite meaningful in that the show is Sunday, Oct. 15, and Bing recorded his very first solo recording on Oct. 14, 1929. He died on Oct. 14, 1977."

Famous hits by Crosby including "Brother Can You Spare a Dime," "Where the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day" and "Moonlight Becomes You" will be featured during the show. And although it won't be the real voice of the late and great original crooner, the tribute performance will be sure to impress.

The Capital Jazz Orchestra does not perform "impersonations" of any artist, Poole said.

"We feel this is not only an ultimately impossible task, but in a larger sense, people leave disappointed whenever this is attempted because there will never be another like the original, this is especially true in Bing's case. Rather, we pay tribute to the man, his music and his

rich legacy," he said.

CJ Poole, son of Clayton Poole, will be the vocalist performing Bing's music, backed by the Clayton Poole Orchestra. Crosby's trademark voice may be tough to match, but the directors had no trouble choosing a vocalist.

"This was an easy choice not only because CJ has been featured in other shows we have done, but he also has an amazing talent for interpretation of this era of great American music," Poole said of his son.

All of the arrangements of the legendary artist's music have been especially arranged for the show by pianist and former Navy Commodores band leader Jerry Ascione, Poole said. Ascione lives in Washington, D.C.

Orchestra members set to perform in Concord on Sunday are from all around the country: New York, New England, Ohio, and Washington, D.C.

The crew will come together for a quick rehearsal the day of the show, said Poole, and then return back to their homes after the show is completed.

**Hannah Sampadian**

## Bing Crosby House

**Ellen Schuster continues to make interesting posts on the Facebook page and I was interested to read this on September 25.**

Every other Monday three to four buses come to the Crosby House with tourists from all over the U.S. These visitors will be on a ship going along the Columbia river. The tour company offers an excursion called "Bus Tour of Spokane and Bing Crosby's House". Today the Spokane tour buses brought visitors to the house from such places as Florida, Illinois and California. Using this IBM machine (pictured on Facebook), these gentlemen (Clifford Carroll S.J., center) were able to determine that the grooves of 200 million records was the equal to 7,000,000 miles. This photograph is undated, however, Bing Crosby had sold more than 200 million records by June of 1960.

## Crossword clues

Our member Sally Monaghan saw a clue in a *New York Times* crossword "Who had more #1 singles than the Beatles". The answer required was "No one" and this led Sarah to write to the paper.

> "Thursday mini had an incorrect answer. Question was, "Who had more #1 singles than the Beatles." The answer was, "No one." That is incorrect. Bing Crosby has most number 1 singles of all time—more than Beatles and Elvis."

This led the paper to reply:

> In terms of the "Who had more #1 singles than the Beatles" clue, our source was Billboard.com's Greatest of All Times Hit Lists. Because their chart didn't start until 1958, Bing Crosby did not quite qualify as an answer. Likewise, George Strait's #1 hits were on the country chart, which also isn't covered.
>
> It would have been more clear to include Billboard in the clue, so we have altered the clue for future solvers to "Who has more #1 Billboard hits than the Beatles".
>
> Thank you for your input, and happy puzzling!

Well done, Sally! Another relevant and amusing Crosby clue was:

**CROSSWORD CLUE**: Modern-day remake of a Bing Crosby film?
**SOLUTION**: HOLIDAYAIRBNB
**Posted on**: July 12, 2017
**Publisher**: New York Times

## Three Cuts of Calico?

**Richard Baker has the answer.**

In the last issue of BING I raised the possibility of the existence of a third take of "A Gal in Calico" but had doubts because some of the differences I identified between it and the known rejected take L4134 were in the length of pauses which had been suggested to me could have been caused by such things as tape stretch.

I have had one meaningful response, from experienced expert John Bassett, who, with great care and patience, has worked his way through each musical note and phrase, reaching the very end of the recording (by which time I had given up) and points out that the key difference is the very final phrase "Yippi-ti-(ya)(yo), ti-yo, ti-ya, ti yo".

On the issued take L4169A of 7 May 1946 the third word is sung as "ya" and the final "yo" is sung on four notes. On the previously known rejected take L4134 of 22 March 1946 the third word is sung as "yo" and the final "yo" is also sung on four notes.

On the newly found take the third word is "yo" but the final "yo" is sung on one note.

Both L4134 and the "new" take omit the word "I'll" from "I'll take my gal in calico down in Santa Fe" at around 1'34", but it is present on L4169A.

Because of the similarities between the L4134 and the "new" take, John and I agree that the probability is that both were recorded on the same date, which possibly means that they would have shared a master number, with, of course, different takes. Let us call it L4134? for convenience. Both L4134 and L4169A are on Jonzo JZCD-42 whilst L4134? is on "16 Original World Hits", on both German MCA CD8-62008 LZ (256 137 2) and Australian MFP MFPCD 023.

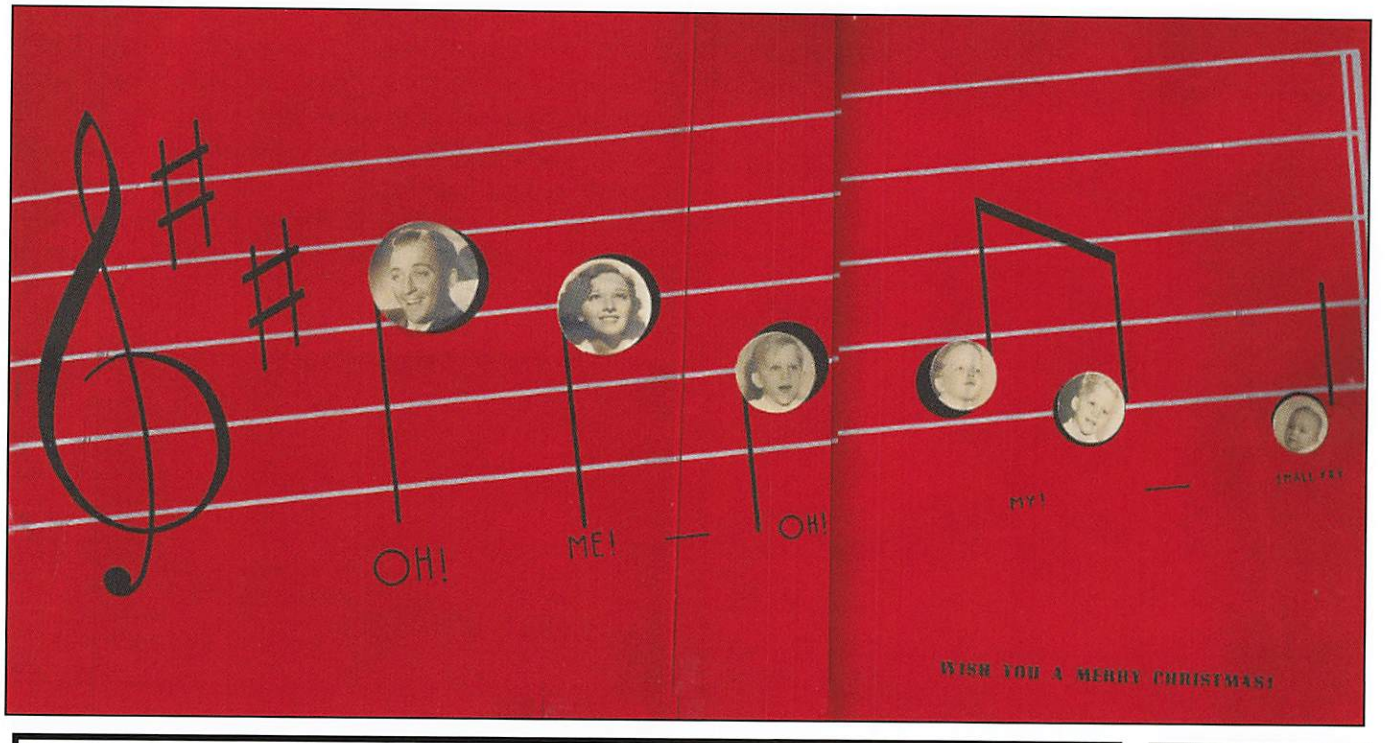
John Bassett has been updating information on all

new discoveries of alternate takes in his "Alternate Bing Crosby–Vol 2" which is an invaluable aid in identifying differences. It now covers 133 titles and follows on from the first volume by Colin Pugh. (See *Trading Post*).

**Richard Baker**

## Bing and Dixie's Christmas card

Maureen Solomon has come up with a rare find. It's Bing and Dixie's Christmas card to friends and family in 1938. It was sent from Hollywood, Bing's 9028 Sunset Blvd. office building which is still standing, on December 19th at 4PM using all of 6 cents to send First Class Mail! The front has a picture of Father Christmas and the inside is reproduced here. The words, read "Oh Me! Oh My! Small Fry". Lindsay had of course been born on January 5, 1938.




# A time to be Jolly: Bing Crosby's Overlooked Contemporary Christmas Album

**Anton Garcia-Fernandez takes a look at a forgotten album.**

Despite his major contributions to the fields of music and cinema and to American culture in general, forty years after his passing on a golf course in Madrid, Spain, Bing Crosby is known by the general public mostly as a performer of Christmas songs. His name has become synonymous with the holiday season, and his reputation in this subgenre of pop music that he helped usher in was cemented by the classic slew of Decca recordings he made between the 1930s and the 1950s, as well as by his starring roles in films such as *Holiday Inn* and *White Christmas* and his countless Christmas television specials. Crosby cut the definitive versions of Yuletide evergreens like Irving Berlin's "White Christmas" and Kim Gannon and Walter Kent's "I'll Be Home for Christmas," to name but two, and his very successful duets with Carol Richards on "Silver Bells" and the Andrews Sisters on "Mele Kalikimaka" influenced virtually every version of those songs that came after—and there have been quite a few.

Not long ago, contemporary crooner Michael Bublé did a virtual duet with Crosby on "White Christmas" during a segment of his 2015 television special, and new repackages of Bing's old Decca sides still turn up now and again as the holidays approach. Christmas is the time of year when we are most likely to hear Bing's voice on the radio or coming out of loudspeakers at the corner grocery store, and most of the time it will be one of his familiar Decca outings that is played.

And yet, in 1970 and 1971, Crosby entered the studio to record an album that has become one of his lesser-known holiday offerings, a collection of songs that has flown under the radar for entirely too long. Originally released as *A Time to Be Jolly* on Sonny Burke's Daybreak label in 1971, it would be reissued on vinyl as *A Christmas Toast* by 20th Century Fox Records

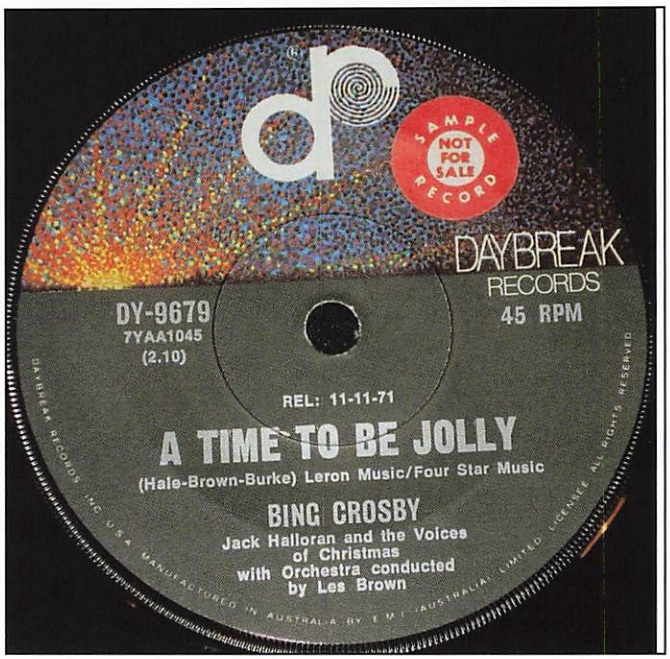
in 1973, and its contents can still be found on a special market PolyGram CD from 1994 under the very generic and unimaginative title of *Christmas Album*. In all three cases, the album went virtually unnoticed by major critics, such that it is very seldom written about and remains a minor entry in the vast Crosby discography. So at the request of my friend Wig Wiggins, who cherishes this record and has offered some invaluable help during the research stages for this piece, I will attempt to shed some light on its recording and on the music contained in its grooves.

A TIME TO BE JOLLY
BING CROSBY
JACK HALLORAN and the Voices of Christmas with Orchestra conducted by LES BROWN
A TIME TO BE JOLLY - I SING NOEL - A CHRISTMAS TOAST - 'ROUND AND 'ROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE - AND THE BELLS RANG
CHRISTMAS IS HERE TO STAY - WHEN YOU TRIM YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE - THE SONG OF CHRISTMAS
CHRISTMAS IS - THE FIRST FAMILY OF CHRISTMAS ... excerpts from The ALFRED BURT CAROLS

By 1970, Crosby's central role in the market of Christmas music had been well established for decades, both in the United States and overseas, by means of records, films, and television; yet, he had not cut a new collection of Yuletide songs in a number of years. When the opportunity arose for such a project, apparently Bing favored the idea of making an album of contemporary-sounding tunes instead of remakes of his old hits, which is very much in keeping with what other vocalists like Frank Sinatra or Andy Williams were doing at the time. The new album would be released on Daybreak Records, which was an RCA imprint founded by Sonny Burke, the popular producer who was responsible for many Reprise outings by Sinatra and who would also produce the sessions that yielded *A Time to Be Jolly*.

Work on the album began with a date at San Francisco's Mercury Sound Studio West on November 16, 1970, when Crosby laid down four tracks with an orchestra under the direction of famed bandleader Les Brown, who also co-wrote the title track, "A Time to Be Jolly," one of the tunes recorded at this first session. Throughout the album, Bing is accompanied by the Voices of Christmas, led by Iowa-born Jack Halloran, who had already worked with him on two of his sing-along projects, *Join Bing and Sing Along* and *On the Happy Side*, as well as on a previous Christmas album entitled *I Wish You a Merry Christmas*. The contribution of the Voices of Christmas is notable because on some of the tracks they sing a few lines from carols written by Michigan composer Alfred Burt as a sort of introduction, thereby bringing together the contemporary sound of the new songs with a more classic Christmas feel, a musical marriage that somehow works surprisingly well.

Crosby is in fine vocal form on this November 1970 session and does a convincing reading of the jumpy "A Time to Be Jolly," written for the occasion by Les Brown, Lee Hale, and Sonny Burke himself. Introduced by an excerpt from Burt's "Caroling, Caroling," Leroy Hale and Joel Herron's "And the Bells Rang" is a pleasant Christmas ditty with which Crosby seems to be having a great deal of fun, even chuckling halfway through it. This track was paired with the previous one for release as a Daybreak single that appeared well before the completed album, and an attractive 45 it definitely is.




A beautiful Sonny Burke-Paul Francis Webster collaboration, "The First Family of Christmas" is introduced by a few lines from Burt's "All on a Christmas Morning" and, melodically, it sometimes reminds us of "The First Snowfall," a tune Bing waxed during his tenure with Decca. The session came to a close with another Sonny Burke composition (written in tandem with Bill Carey and E.B. Powell), "When You Trim Your Christmas Tree," preceded by a snippet of Burt's carol "We'll Dress the House." Bing seems to enjoy the song's relaxed, melancholy feel and delivers a lovely vocal performance of a lyric that treads on similar ground as that of his classic "I'll Be Home for Christmas."

It would take about eleven months until Crosby entered the studio again to complete *A Time to Be Jolly*,

and when he finally did so, on September 7 and 8, 1971, he overdubbed vocals for six instrumental tracks recorded about a week before, on August 31. The practice of prefacing some of the songs with excerpts from Burt's carols continued with Percy Faith and Spence Maxwell's "Christmas Is" (the introduction here is from Burt's "Bright, Bright the Holly Berries") a pleasant song packed with metaphors that attempt to define the essence of the holidays. Ken Lane and Irving Taylor's "A Christmas Toast" might be the weakest song on the album: it opens with the rather trite lines "Now let's prepare a toddy / That's good for everybody" and does not really improve from there, though Bing does as much as he can to pepper this Christmas cocktail with as much charm as he can muster. Introduced by some lines from Burt's carol "Some Children See Him,"

Noël Regney and Gloria Shayne Baker's "I Sing Noel" is much better and finds Bing making a socially conscious statement as he claims to "sing Noel for all little children who have no Christmas tree" and "for little girls whose hands are trembling in the cold" and wishing for a better world. "The Song of Christmas" is arguably one of the highlights of the album, an excellent melody written by Kuiokalani Lee, one of the most talented Hawaiian songwriters of the 1960s and '70s, who penned such memorable ballads as "I'll Remember You," recorded by Elvis Presley in 1968 and covered by the likes of Tony Bennett and Andy Williams. It really is a perfect tune for Crosby's vocal range, and listening to it, one is reminded of how much singers like Dean Martin learned from Der Bingle. Jay Livingston and Ray Evans's "'Round and 'Round the Christmas Tree" is one of the most playful, children-oriented tunes on the album, and it somehow works very well with "Come, Dear Children," the Burt carol chosen to introduce it. Finally, the last song for which Bing overdubbed vocals (he seems to have recorded another track, "An Old-Fashioned Christmas," yet it has never surfaced) is Bill Angelos and Alan Kohan's "Christmas Is Here to Stay," one of the most joyous selections and a perfect way to close the original LP release of *A Time to Be Jolly* on a high note.

Listening to the entire album as it was originally issued, one has the impression that Bing sounds more comfortable and relaxed and is more in sync with the orchestra on the tunes recorded in 1970 than on the session from 1971. The fact that on the latter date he overdubbed his vocals onto previously recorded tracks instead of interacting live in the studio with the band might go a long way in explaining the reason for the difference in feeling. Yet the finished product remains engaging and highly enjoyable, which makes the critical silence about the collection since its first release all the more puzzling. The few critics who assessed *A Time to Be Jolly* as it first hit the stores generally praised it, as is the case with the anonymous reviewer who wrote the following in the November 6, 1971 issue of *Billboard*: "Crosby joins the new Daybreak label (handled by RCA), with his first Christmas package in many years! An exceptional one it is! With fresh material, Crosby is in top vocal form with the title tune as well as with 'Christmas Toast' and 'I Sing Noel.' Delightful package, it should prove a heavy seller for the season." The reviewer is, indeed, right to point out Crosby's convincing vocal delivery throughout, and the review's prediction of heavy sales seems to be borne out by Ken Barnes's assertion that the album "enjoyed a reasonably healthy sale" (*The Crosby Years*, p. 97) at the time of its release. Though Crosby's stature as the elder statesman of holiday crooners rests on his classic Decca sides made over a period of about two decades, *A Time to Be Jolly* offers another side of Bing the Christmas singer, a more contemporary one that constitutes a worthy addition to his Yuletide canon and that deserves more critical attention than it has garnered thus far. Fortunately, at the time of this writing, the 1994 CD reissue of these ten tracks entitled *Christmas Album* is still available at a very affordable price, and it definitely belongs on the shelves of any serious Crosby aficionado.

**Anton Garcia-Fernandez** antongarciafdez@gmail.com

## Richard Kaplan: & the Bing Crosby CBS Radio Tapes

**Frans van der Kolff spotted this interesting interview recently. Back in September 2014, the *TapeOp* website published an interview with Richard Kaplan, a noted sound recording engineer, about what became the 7-CD Mosaic set of Bing's radio recordings. Larry Crane asked the questions, and it makes fascinating reading.**

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**Let's talk about the Bing Crosby radio project.**

It's probably the biggest splicing project ever done in analog tape. I did over 50,000 splices.

**Just having to restore the splices that were on the original tapes?**

The tapes were poorly stored. Many of them had been flooded, the boxes were melting and the tapes were molding, and I had to go through inch by inch with a camel hair brush to wipe off the mold, restore each of the splices, and fix where they had torn. It was acetate tape. It was before the poly tape that they use now.

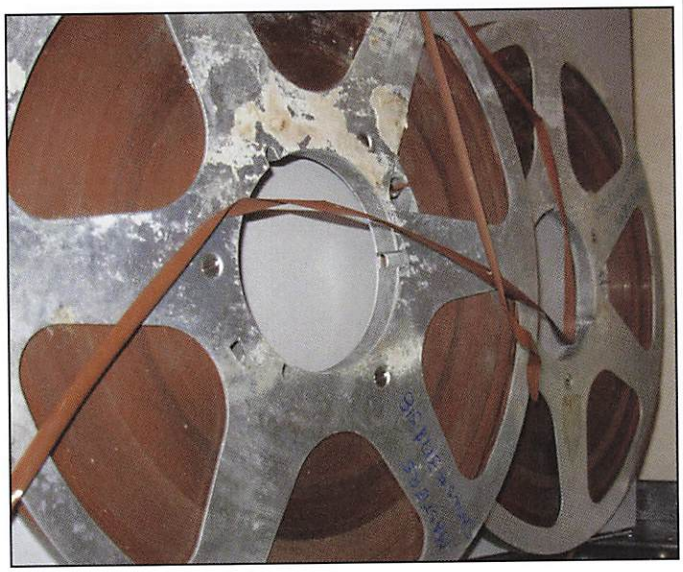
**That's more brittle, right?**

It's brittle, and it doesn't stretch — it breaks. It just snaps. Which in some ways was a good thing, because if it stretches, you can't play it. If it snaps, you can put together the 30 pieces with a magnifying glass. [laughs]

**How did that job come to your hands?**

I had lived next door to Bing Crosby's daughter up at Indigo Ranch. The ranch was originally John Barrymore, Sr.'s place, Drew Barrymore's grandfather,

and it was 60 acres overlooking the ocean with orchards and streams and waterfalls in Malibu. And my second-closest neighbor, who was about a quarter of a mile away (we had a good buffer), was Mary Crosby, Bing's daughter. We had been close friends over the years, and when she and her husband went up to Kathryn Crosby's (Bing's widow's house) by San Francisco, he was rummaging through the basement and he opened up this closet and it was like floor-to-ceiling with tapes.



**The original masters of the 1954-56 radio show.**

**Nobody had known?**

Nobody had looked, and nobody had even known that these tapes existed. What they were is original masters of a radio show that was done from 1954 to 1956, some 53 years ago. They were played on the radio once and then stuck in a box and put on the shelf. So, 53 years later, he's rummaging through the basement looking for something, finds this closet of tapes, and is like, "Oh my god, these might be something special! Who knows?" They had no idea what was even on them. So, the son-in-law calls me up and says, "Richard, I know and respect your work. I know you've gone into retirement." I'd just sold the ranch and moved here, gotten rid of all my gear to Sonic Circus. He said, "What we're going to do is I'd like to hire you for a couple of days to come down to Capitol Records' studios, and we're going to go through a sampling of the tapes, and I'm going to have a bunch of world-famous guys there to decide who's going to do this project. Could you just sort of oversee this thing and make sure I don't get screwed?" So I went down to Capitol, and I'm not going to mention any names, but there were a couple of very prominent producers and engineers there that were handpicked to possibly do the restoration. The first guy takes one of the tapes, puts it up on the Studer, mis-threads it, and snaps the tape. A master tape of an unreleased album.

**These things make me nervous.**

Yeah. Not only snaps it, but this was a 1-inch 8-track, and it was poly tape, so it didn't just snap — it stretched, and then broke into a number of pieces. And it was in the intro to the key song on the album.

**Oh god.**

Well, I just said, "Maybe we can fix it." He said, "That's impossible, that's the only copy of it." The next thing that happened is another one of these guys takes one of the 1/4-inch tapes, which is one of the radio show tapes, puts it up on an ATR, and hits rewind. The old splices in this acetate tape just come flying across the room, and the tape goes into 22 pieces. I stepped in at that point and said, "I'm gonna operate the tape." I started operating the tape, and then we had some things to mix down, and to EQ, and to change, and compress, and stuff like that, and nobody seemed to know what to do! So I just jumped in. I went over to the Neve console and started doing all the mixes and the playbacks and the copying. They wanted to go 96 kHz, 24-bit, so I set up everything, and we started making some copies. He went home that night, listened, and we came back the next day for the second day of this trial run, and a couple more stupid disasters happened with these guys. He called me up that night and said, "You know, you're the only guy in the world, I think, who can do this. Would you?"

**I think there's a real difference between working in an archive capacity and being an engineer or producer.**

I'd been handling old tapes, new tapes, digital tapes, everything for 35 years. It was just second nature to me. And I knew how to make splices. I know that you don't take an old tape, hit rewind, and walk away from the machine. You go through real slowly. In fact, as it ended up in the restoration, I hand-wound a half a mile of tape on close to six hundred reels. Now, let me tell you, hand winding, and checking every splice, and going through there with a camel hair brush and cleaning off the mold is a half a day operation per tape.

**Oh yeah.**

After you've hand-wound the thing back, you get one good play. So you either get it or you don't, and I'm one of those guys who had to do that all through my career. My first gold album was with Neil Young, and I learned quick-on that you're either ready, or he walks away and doesn't come back.

**I've heard.**

He does not put up with, "Let's do another take, I need to set the EQ a little different." It's like you get it, or he's gone. That's how I learned to do things. You don't show up when the session's about to start and expect to do stuff while they're waiting.

**Right, exactly.**

I didn't lose a single song. And the one that had been shredded at the beginning — as we were doing the initial playback of it, I was recording everything off onto a CD player, so it was 44.1 kHz, 16-bit, and I had the intro that got shredded.

**Oh my god.**

I went back and a couple days later put it back together

and played it for him, and he was like, "This was impossible! Where did this come from?"

**If you're dealing with real fragile tape like that, you have to always be recording, just in case.**

Always. I mean what do you hurt, hard drive space?

**Not these days.**

That's right. And I had a very good digital assistant for the first part of the project. He was sharp, and I learned a lot about how to do the stuff. The guy was Stephen Couch. I used him for probably the first hundred tapes and ended up doing the rest of the project myself, inch by inch, tape by tape.

**You moved the operations here to your house, too?**

We did two days at Capitol, and then he closed it down. He was totally discouraged, and he called me and was like, "Can you do it?" I said, "I'll try." So I quickly called David Lyons, and said, "I need a tape machine!" I had just given him like 20 tape machines.

**I was gonna ask when we were first emailing about the project. I was thinking you must have kept one of the tape decks.**

I thought that I was out of the business and that if I ever did anything it would be at another studio, but then when I started checking around to get studio time for this, the studio time would have killed us.

**Right, I was going to say, that's prohibitive. And in most studios you wouldn't even be using the console in most cases.**

Exactly! My tape path here was very simple. For part of the project, I went through the Studer playback electronics, which are good, straight into my homemade A-to-D converter, straight into the computer — nothing in the way.

**Straight path.**

Yeah. Later on, I used a set of germanium 3M electronics that when David was taking all my stuff, he was like, "Oh, I don't want these." I had a pair of old 3M M23 electronics with big transformers and all germanium transistors, and they just had a sound to them.

**Yeah, I would imagine it has a different sound than the Studer.**

I used that on part of it. Then I did all the pre-mastering, so when we turned it over to Mosaic to do it, the guy calls up and he says, "This is the best stuff I've ever heard. I can't believe these 50-year-old tapes!" He knew that they were moldy, cruddy, and almost one-pass and you're done.

**They're thinking they might get something that sounds like a megaphone.**

Some crappy, crackly radio-show kind of tapes. I'll play you some. It came out wonderful, and it's been getting rave reviews. The main thing they're saying is that the sound quality is unbelievable, that we've never heard anything like this from the '50s. Besides the engineers and Bing, nobody heard it in the first place...

**The finished article.**

**Because over the radio it wouldn't have sounded that good.**

That's right, and I'll tell you, these guys doing the radio show stuff were sharp. There was a guy named Buddy Cole who was a band leader and keyboard player, and he did all the live stuff with Bing back then, including some albums that were released, but this stuff was made strictly for the radio show. It was never released on an album. I found over 160 songs that had never been heard by anybody who didn't listen to the radio show that night.

**Wow, that's a lot!**

So that was released as a box set, limited edition. I think each one is serial numbered (I'm not sure), and the Bing fans have been going nuts over it.

*(Editor: Our grateful thanks to Richard Kaplan for a wonderful job. The Mosaic set is still available at: http://www.mosaicrecords.com/prodinfo.asp?number=245-MD-CD.)*

## The First Little Miss Minute Maid

**Back in 2010, your Editor was put in touch with a Mrs. Hoffman in North Carolina as she had an important involvement with Bing and Minute Maid Orange Juice. Unfortunately nothing really transpired at that time, but now her son Craig tells her story.**

Everyone remembers a first. The first time driving a car, the first baby, walking into class on the first day of school, that first kiss, and the first ever job.

Late in World War II our soldiers were set to enjoy a first: Minute Maid Frozen Orange Juice. However, the war ended. With so much groundwork already laid, the next move, market it to America.

Early sales showed promise. In 1948, legendary performer Bing Crosby entered the picture and everything changed. Still, Minute Maid needed someone behind the scenes to mass merchandise the brand. Bing's team turned to a marketing veteran, Hamilton Stone to expand Minute Maid Frozen Orange Juice nationwide. Stone had a successful background working with Sperry Flour, Chiquita Brands, Snow Crop, and a string of other new food lines.

**Hamilton Stone and Bing begin their partnership**

Stone did not seek the spotlight. With Bing Crosby, it became part of the job. The two attended dinners, charitable events, parades, football games, and shows. Stone recalled years later patiently waiting for Bing to sign some important documents at a huge auditorium hours before a Crosby concert. It took a little extra time; Bing and his good pal, Bob Hope had a competition going. The two were hitting golf balls to the upper levels, seeing who had the most accurate swing. When they finally put down the clubs, Bing signed the paperwork.

There's no doubt Bing Crosby was the biggest star for Minute Maid. The fast growing brand got another big boost when a cartoon baby, Little Miss Minute Maid, helped showcase the frozen orange juice. People loved her. However, before the cartoon baby became a popular symbol, Stone decided to create a "real life" Little Miss Minute Maid, to help test the product. Someone to go to stores, get reaction, and pour juice samples for shoppers. Stone enlisted his teenage daughter, Betty, who officially became the first ever Little Miss Minute Maid.

Her first sampling experience took place in Seattle, Washington. "I had a little costume on. I would go to the grocery stores and people would try this frozen orange juice which they had never heard of before. It was good once it was shaken; they thought it was good, very good. Frozen orange juice became very popular" remembered Betty Stone Hoffman.

"Bing Crosby was a very nice man. On one occasion my sister, Daddy, and I went to his house. I remembered playing out in the yard with his kids. I remember when we were out playing he sang to us all. He was very down to earth." said Hoffman.

She recalls, as a teenager at Redondo Union High School in Southern California seeing Bing and his famous friends. "I was crazy about the movie stars. I remember in 1949 and 1950, Daddy would take Joanne (her sister) and I to the radio show that Bing Crosby and Bob Hope did, where they were advertising Minute Maid. I also saw Bing and Frank Sinatra together. So it was fun for us to go to those radio broadcasts. Bing did a lot of advertising at that time. He was promoting it. Daddy did the work. Bing was happy with him because he did a good job" she said.

Hoffman said her father and Crosby took trips to Pebble Beach. They played golf, dined together, and promoted Minute Maid especially at two huge events: The Rose Parade and Rose Bowl.

In 1951, millions of people saw Hoffman and her sister on the award winning Minute Maid parade float. They proudly waved to the huge crowds along the streets of Pasadena, California and for a national television audience in the 62nd Tournament of Roses Parade. "It was interesting because there was a spray that came out from the float and it smelled like orange juice. It was called *Sunday Morning Breakfast.* It was very exciting. It was the first time Minute Maid came in. In the years after, the floats got bigger and bigger." said Hoffman.

**Betty (left) with her sister, Joanne Stone Tinker, on the Minute Maid float.**

Being associated with Bing Crosby meant being connected to Hollywood. One rising star in the 1950's was Jane Powell. "Her father worked for my Daddy. We would have dinner with her family. Jane would play the piano. My sister and I would sing. I always went to her movies. She danced and had a beautiful voice" said Hoffman. She attended Powell's wedding. A large crowd showed up for the wedding reception. Suddenly, everyone stopped what they were doing when a teenager walked in to see Powell. It was Elizabeth Taylor. "There were a number of stars there. But I remember Elizabeth Taylor. She was absolutely gorgeous. She was so beautiful" said Hoffman.

When growing up, Hoffman's family moved to Connecticut as Minute Maid expanded to the northeast. Her father also spearheaded Minute Maid sales efforts in Florida. Though Crosby stayed busy making motion pictures and performing on the radio, Hoffman said Bing and her Daddy always found time to talk. Stone eventually moved back to California. "He loved the west coast" she added. In California orange trees were everywhere. People squeezed their own orange juice. However, other parts of the country did not have orange trees. Minute Maid Frozen Orange Juice made is easier. "It was a lot handier than squeezing your own, pouring it in the water. The whole thing was mixing it properly" she said.

Not long after taking part in the Rose Parade, Hoffman got married and then became a stay home mother after her first child arrived. Hamilton Stone continued to successfully partner with Bing Crosby until 1958. A couple years later Coca-Cola bought the now iconic brand.

Hoffman is aware Bing, her father, and many others including a longtime friend of the two, Jack Fox, did something amazing. Today millions of people worldwide enjoy Minute Maid Orange Juice.

The family still has autographed items, old records, memento's, and notes Crosby sent her father. "He liked Bing Crosby always. He liked him before, he liked his voice, you are talking about back in the thirties when Bing Crosby was there, and he was a very popular singer of the time" Hoffman said.

Crosby and Stone kept in touch and often discussed business ideas. Her father visited Bing at his golf tournament and at various community events. He and Bing went to Pebble Beach in the early 1960's and were walking around. Bing walked into an art shop and showed my grandfather some paintings, saying, "This guy is very good—I'd buy one of his paintings if I were you—the bigger the better." Stone duly bought one for around $700, which back then was a lot money. It was by the well-known Alexander Dzigurski Sr. and was a scenic painting of the ocean at Pebble Beach. So Stone and Bing walked out of shop with a huge 24 x 48 painting. Dzigurski only did a limited number of paintings that size. It stayed in my grandfather's house until his death and our family has it now.

As the years passed, Crosby and Stone exchanged notes at Christmas until Bing Crosby's death in 1977. A decade before Crosby died; a job transfer shifted the Hoffman family from the west to the east coast. Not long after they settled, Betty Stone Hoffman experienced a sudden and unexpected first; the challenges of raising four children as a single parent. During her difficult times she turned to God for guidance. A minister offered Hoffman a job as an administrative assistant with the Anglican Orthodox Church in Statesville, North Carolina where she lived. Hoffman credited God for giving her the strength to get through the divorce, raise her children, and to care for her father who died from Alzheimer's disease.

**Elizabeth "Betty" Stone Hoffman, the first Little Miss Minute Maid, in later years.**

During her long journey through life, the lasting memories of her father, Bing Crosby, and the friendship those two shared, stayed close to her heart. "We never stopped enjoying Minute Maid Orange Juice. And every holiday we would watch Bing's movie; *White Christmas* and sing his famous song." Hoffman proudly said.

In 2016, Hoffman celebrated 50 years of church service which included countless missionary trips to foreign countries and cities across America.

On May 6, 2017, Elizabeth "Betty" Stone Hoffman, the first Little Miss Minute Maid, died after a courageous battle with cancer.

**Craig Hoffman**

*(Editor: When you hear from people who worked with Bing, there is seldom a bad word about him. Clearly Hamilton Stone and his daughter had a very high opinion of Mr. Crosby.)*

# The Final Bombshell on the Road to Saigon

**We all know about Bing's recording of "White Christmas" being played to signal the evacuation from Vietnam back in 1975 – but was it? Martin McQuade explains.**

While watching the final installment of *The Vietnam War*, Ken Burns' illuminating and exhaustive chronicle of America's ultimate crucible, this reporter keenly anticipated the moment when Bing's recording of "White Christmas" would bring the harrowing saga to its grim finale. As the crescendo arrived, Peter Coyote narrated:

*"At 10: 48 that morning, President Ford's order to execute Operation Frequent Wind - rescue by squads of helicopters flying back and forth from a flotilla of thirty American warships forty miles offshore - reached U.S. officials in the South Vietnamese capital. Within half an hour a prearranged signal to evacuate was broadcast over the American radio station in Saigon: it was meant to begin with Bing Crosby singing "White Christmas," but at the last minute a copy of that record could not be found, so Tennessee Ernie Ford's version signaled the exodus. A cryptic message followed: "The temperature in Saigon is one hundred and five degrees and rising."*

In the midst of this passage, the soundtrack features Ford's anemic imitation of the Crosby classic. This account also appears in the series' accompanying volume, *The Vietnam War: An Intimate History* by Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns, published by Penguin Random House.

Ernie Ford? What heresy! Who ever heard of his record of "White Christmas?" This bombshell defied long-standing Crosby dogma that has echoed through the decades. There have been countless accounts of Bing's voice overseeing the frantic flight from the embassy, several attributed to seemingly unimpeachable authorities. Frank Snepp, featured on the installment, was the chief strategy analyst for the CIA in Vietnam. In his 1977 book, *An Insider's Account of Saigon's Indecent End,* Snepp voices no doubt that he heard Bing's rendition. In an interview dated October 14, 1981 with WGBH Boston, he repeated his seared memory.

*"It was a bizarre Kafkaesque time because as those helicopters came into the Embassy one could hear wafting in over the walls of that citadel the strains of Bing Crosby's "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" That was a code. It was beamed out over Saigon radio and over the official American station in Saigon. It was supposed to summon all Americans to various staging points. What a bizarre code it was. And I remember amidst all this chaos that totally incongruous note, "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas."*

On a 2001 CBS special, *Breaking the News*, Bob Simon, who covered the war for CBS News, recalled, *this was the story of our generation and everyone wanted to cover the bitter end. I don't know if anyone has identified who it was who decided that the signal for the evacuation of Saigon would be Bing Crosby singing "White Christmas." The surrealism had reached its climax! Saigon was getting shelled by the North Vietnamese to the playing of "White Christmas."*

These testimonials notwithstanding, Burns could never be accused of sloppy scholarship. His erudition is legend. Spurring my curiosity was the realization that there is no audio of any actual recording of "White Christmas" to be heard on any extant video taken during the evacuation. All documentary renderings merely superimpose the Crosby version upon the assembled footage.

Was mass hypnosis at play here, or PTSD en masse? Had fable, once again, superseded the facts of this apocalypse? Perhaps, amid the turmoil and hysteria, people only heard the song, naturally assuming it was Bing singing. After all, "White Christmas" was Bing, and vice versa, both inextricably entwined for all time. My research yielded clarity in the form of "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas," an account by Chuck Neil, the announcer of that fateful signal. Neil was most likely Burns' source for dispelling the myth. Here are pertinent excerpts.

*"I had been in Vietnam since 1967 working for various companies. In 1973, I was working for Federal Electric Corporation-ITT, and a friend said to me, "Hey, the military are leaving and they're going to have civilians take over their radio station. Why don't you apply?... I went in and auditioned and interviewed... My job title was "news announcer."...* [one of] *four Americans, taking over American radio...Well, about '74 we started to feel that Congress was going to take a hands-off approach to Vietnam, which they subsequently did. I wasn't aware how serious that was until just a couple of months before the fall. I kept hoping. Most of us did that were there, that Congress would allocate some money to the Vietnamese to subsidize them and keep them going. And they didn't. That's what caused the fall.*

*I don't remember how we got started on this thing of the early warning, but we knew that somehow we were going to have to notify the Americans there. Just about a hundred percent of the Americans there listened to American radio because it was the only radio station around...Ann Bottorf of the DAO* [Defense Attaché's Office] *and some of the security people got together and*

*said we'd have to have an early warning. So* [my colleague] *E. M. Turvett and I were called up to the Embassy to the security office and we tried to figure out what we could do on the radio to alert people to move out to their evacuation point or staging area for immediate evacuation...So I said, "Why not play a recording of something that every American will recognize in a split second?" Plus the incongruity of the thing being played in the middle of summer would alert them to the fact that they'd have to take a hike. So why not play "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas?" Of course I was thinking about Bing Crosby's rendition, the biggest seller, but of all the thousands of records and tapes we had at the radio station, I couldn't find Bing Crosby's recording, so I got Tennessee Ernie Ford's. It didn't matter who I had; but I noticed Frank Snepp and several other people said that it was Bing Crosby. It doesn't make that much difference.*

*Then I announced after the song, "The temperature is 105 degrees and rising." That was the signal, then, that the evacuation was on. We recorded that and put it on a tape cartridge... So on April 29, about 11:30 or 11:40 in the morning, I got the call from DAO, some colonel. I answered the phone and said "This is Chuck." And he said, "Chuck, how many Americans do you have there right now?" And I said, "Four." And he said, "Well you are ordered as of right now to evacuate immediately and proceed to the U.S. Embassy for evacuation flight."...I hung up the phone and went in to Turvett, and said..."this is it. Evacuate now." We had a big Gates Automatic Programmer. We programmed most of our day on that machine. And I went back in there and took the cartridge with "105 degrees and rising" and "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas," and popped it in the slot and punched it up. And that was my final act at the radio station.* (Taken from Chuck Neil's blog at http://lde421.blogspot.jp/2012/12/chuck-neils-vietnam-dreaming-of-white.html. Neil's account is also part of *Tears before the Rain: An Oral History of the Fall of South Vietnam* by Larry Engelmann.)

Here is the text of the "handout" communique that presaged the havoc. *Should it be prearranged for US personnel to report to their designated assembly area, a coded message will be broadcast over American Radio Service. This message will consist of a temperature report for Saigon of "105 degrees and rising" followed by approximately the first 30 seconds of "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas." This message will be repeated every 15 minutes for approximately two hours. If you hear the above message, report, with travel documentation, to your nearest assembly point. Stay tuned to ARS FM 99.9 (primary) of FM 90.1 9 (secondary) for further announcements.*

This "White Christmas" conundrum is a metaphor for the bedlam that reigned during the entire war, and parallels a situation recurring like clockwork throughout every episode of Burns' epic presentation. The chaos embedded in the Vietnam conflagration lead inexorably to propaganda that, in many instances, still demands correction. An excerpt from *The Sympathizer*, the 2016 Pulitzer Prize winner for fiction by Vietnamese American author Viet Thanh Nguyen pungently offers a last ironic turn to this now closed case.

*"The cue for the evacuation's final phase was "White Christmas," played on American Radio Service, but even this did not go according to plan. First, since the song was top secret information, meant only for the Americans and their allies, everyone in the city also knew what to listen for. Then what do you think happens? Claude said. The deejay can't find the song. The Bing Crosby one. He's tossing his booth looking for that tape, and of course it's not there. Then what? Said the general. He finds a version by Tennessee Ernie Ford and plays that. Who's he? I said. How do I know? At least the melody and lyrics were the same. So, I said, situation normal. Claude nodded. All f**** up. Let's just hope history forgets the snafus...Or was I not giving the military mastermind enough credit for being a deadpan ironist, he having also possibly chosen "White Christmas" as a poke in the eye to all my countrymen who neither celebrated Christmas nor had ever seen a white one."*

There is one final twist. Bing opposed America's involvement in the war, as revealed in this entry from *Bing Crosby Day by Day* by our editor Malcolm Macfarlane and available at *BING magazine's* website.

**December 1970 (undated).** Bing visits the wounded Vietnam veterans at the Army's Letterman General Hospital in the Presidio, San Francisco. Around this time, he writes to his godson Herb Rotchford Jr., then attending the University of Washington. *"It seems to me the government is making noises like they want to get out of Vietnam. I hope they're serious about this, and I know you hope so, too. It would be a great relief, I'm confident. It's a silly war, and it doesn't seem to be getting anywhere. Just costing a lot of lives, and a lot of money. Nobody can give you a valid reason why."*

*Day by Day* also quotes an interview Bing gave Judy Stone of the *New York Times* for the December 13, 1970 edition. The article states that Bing voted for JFK.

*"I liked Kennedy's image. I thought he was very bright. He had a lot of class, a lot of charm, a lot of charisma and still he was a man's man. But politicians always seem to me kind of phony...I think Nixon is trying to do a good job. I certainly think we ought to pull back internationally, get out of Vietnam if we can do it with some face-saving and leave them in a shape where they at least have a chance of surviving."*

The diary also reveals that in March 1971 Bing joined a group including Bob Hope (revered for his annual USO trips to South Vietnam) with plans to offer ten million dollars in ransom money for POWs in North Vietnam.

Divine intervention prevailed on that long ago momentous day, preventing, in the nick of time, the vocal contribution of America's Troubadour to an inglorious chapter of a tumultuous conflict, so unlike "the ones we used to know."

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Once again Michael Arenella and his Dreamland Orchestra provided a nostalgic Jazz Age extravaganza on New York's Governors' Island August 26/27. Drew Nugent and The Midnight Society (profiled in the summer 2016 issue) regaled the attendees on the lawn with scintillating renditions of early Bing tunes, most notably a husky "Street of Dreams." Michael will be hosting his annual Sweetheart Soiree in New York on Saturday, February 10, 2018. Details to follow.

### *A Little Bit of Fresh Danish*

On Friday, October 20th yours truly performed "Bing Crosby's Hit Parade" at the venerable Danish Athletic Club in Brooklyn, New York. Pianist Dan Furman accompanied me at this most appropriate venue, considering Bing's Danish lineage. In fact, the name "Crosby" is Danish in origin, and means "Town of the Cross." "Cros" is a transposition of the Danish "kors" and "by" is a diminutive of the Danish "burg". "Legend has it that the earliest ancestors of Bing Crosby were Vikings who migrated to Ireland, Scotland, and Northern England. Naturally, Bing's association with Victor Borge comprised some of the show's narrative. The capacity audience enjoyed the many Crosby chestnuts as well as somewhat unfamiliar tunes such as "As Long As I'm Dreaming," "Without a Word of Warning" and "Dissertation on the State of Bliss." "You Keep Coming Back Like a Song" served as an emotional finale to what appeared to be the only cabaret tribute in the metropolitan area honoring the 40th anniversary of Bing's passing.

**Martin McQuade**

# TRADING POST

*Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries Please send all advertisements to the Editor*

**Gord Atkinson,** 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Ottawa, ON K2S 1B9, Canada.

Gord's latest book "The Golden Years of Entertainment" is available to Crosby collectors for $20.00 US or Canadian funds or equivalent in British pounds. Write to Gord direct. It would make a nice Christmas present.

**John Bassett,** "Bingville", 15 Oast Way, Rochford, Essex SS4 1RZ, UK

"Alternate Bing Crosby – Vol. 2". Issued as a companion volume to Colin Pugh's invaluable 1988 publication, this 67-page edition continues the story by examining every alternate Take discovered since that first edition. In total, 131 titles are dealt with in this A4 size publication, currently available at £7.50 (including postage). All remittances in £ sterling should be made payable to John Bassett and sent to him at the address above.

**ALSO**

Top prices paid for the following LPs in excellent condition:

10" UK Brunswick LA8578, LA8579, LA8584, LA8592, LA8602, LA8705 and LA8728. Also: "Sunday in Hollywood with Ann Blyth and Bing Crosby" (US World Horizon), "Bing Crosby's Russian Adventure" (US Roulette), "The Wilfred Thomas Show" (AU Festival) and "Among My Souvenirs" (SPA Cobra).

Please write to John if you can help.

**Festival Films,** 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com – website: www.fesfilms.com/ )

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your NTSC requirements for Bing on DVD. They also have thousands of Public Domain films and TV shows. Films are sold on DVD-R and Mpeg2 video file formats.

**Carolyn Schneider,** email: ARTIST71635@msn.com.

Carolyn has written a book for children called "Sniffles, the Guinea Pig with a Runny Nose" which should be available as a hard cover and an eBook around the first of December. E-mail Carolyn for further details.

## Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

**The Australian Bing Crosby Society**

Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: deryk@net2000.com.au)

Congratulations to the Society as it celebrated its 40th anniversary in August. The August film night, held in celebration of the anniversary was well attended and a party atmosphere prevailed. A special commemorative cake, courtesy of Treasurer Keith Dorman's daughter, was the very impressive centrepiece in the extensive spread that awaited members at the interval.

The screening of *Going My Way* was preceded by an episode of *Hollywood Palace,* although not the one advertised. The other episode will be re-scheduled for a later date.

Bi-monthly newsletters are issued by the Society and they can now be received by email if desired. The regular film

nights continue and the next one is planned for December 11. The venue is the Library behind the Collingwood Town Hall complex at 11 Stanton St., Abbotsford, Melbourne.

**Pictured are Committee members (l to r) Peter de Ryk, Josie Conway, President John Allan, and Keith Dorman.**

### Internet sites:

**BING magazine**

This site contains a considerable amount of reference material all of which is being updated as new information arises. The site has been visited 1030 times in the last four months. Since the site was redesigned some years ago by Howard Crossland, it has been visited no less than 40,815 times. See www.bingmagazine.co.uk

**Crosby Fan World**

This bulletin board type site is at: http://crosbyfanworld.boardhost.com/
Mature and knowledgeable contributions are being made and the site is sensibly moderated by Richard Baker.

Other sites well worth a visit are:

**www.BingCrosby.com** - run by Bing Crosby Enterprises

**Bing Crosby on Facebook** - run by Bing Crosby Enterprises

**Bing Crosby House** (on Facebook)
**Bing Crosby on Twitter** - @Bingconstantly and @Bing_Crosby are the links..
**Harry Lillis "Bing" Crosby—"The Old Groaner"—The Bing Crosby Fan Page** – a Facebook group.
**Jack Boyle's** "Bing for the Seasons – a Facebook group.
**The Early Bing Crosby 1926-1936 a** Facebook group administered by Mike Pearl
**Jon Oye's Blog** – run by ICC stalwart Jon Oye. Go to: http://derbingle.blogspot.com/
**The Bing Crosby News Archive** - David Lobosco runs this blog at http://bingfan03.blogspot.co.uk/

**Steven Lewis' Bing Crosby Internet Museum** - See http://www.stevenlewis.info/crosby/

## OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

**We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.**

**Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society**, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com, website: www.flias.com/ ) - A magazine called *Laine Lines* is published three times a year.

**International Al Jolson Society,** c/o Sandra K. Gerloff, 419 Glenwood Drive, Douglassville, PA 19518, USA (website: www.jolson.org - also on Facebook). A different Jolson radio show can be heard via the web site each week. The KMH show from October 16, 1947 with Bing as guest was heard on October 15.

**International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society,** c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, email: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

**Memory Lane,** P O Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England. (www.memorylane.org.uk)
The acclaimed quarterly magazine for lovers of 1920s, 1930s and 1940s music. A "*must*" for 78 RPM collectors. Initial annual subscription only £10 (UK) or £15 (overseas) for readers of BING magazine. (Normal price £15 - UK, £20 - overseas.)

**Sinatra Music Society** - Mrs. Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-899771, www.sinatramusicsociety.com/). This was founded in 1955. A quarterly magazine called *Perfectly Frank* is issued. Fees within the UK are £15 a year; £19 for European membership and £23 for the rest of the world.

**Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch,** c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 003531 8212418). - Meetings now take place at 8:00 pm, second Monday of every month in the Talbot Hotel, Stillorgan, Dublin.

## Books 'n' Bing

## 1. Sinatra: The Chairman

**by James Kaplan, Sphere, 2015, Hardcover, 992 pages. ISBN-10: 1847445284, ISBN-13: 978-1847445285.**

**Joao Daudt Oliveira was annoyed by this book and he tells us why.**

Frank Sinatra's biographer James Kaplan wrote a good many inaccurate comments about Bing Crosby in his second volume entitled "Sinatra - The Chairman". James Kaplan doesn't do justice to Bing, always comparing him unfavorably to Sinatra, so as to point out Bing's apparent shortcomings in contrast to Sinatra's greatness. It's not unusual for certain Sinatra biographers to try to denigrate Bing's image and disparage him as a singer as well. Tom Santopietro's book, "Sinatra in Hollywood" is a case in point, but fortunately Martin McQuade's review published in BING #151 (page 17) demolishes his negative views.

Quite a few people may think that when a Crosby fan talks about Sinatra nowadays he feels a certain envy because Frank became such an international super

media star and Bing has perhaps been relegated to a secondary position over the years. I hasten to say that I have always admired Sinatra as a singer. I am indeed a Sinatra collector who owns each and every Sinatra commercial recording and a large bulk of his books and radio, TV, concerts and bootleg recordings. So I feel comfortable in talking about him. I know his recordings – as I know Bing's – so I am able to judge freely, devoid of any degree of envy or whatever. Frank is indeed an extraordinary singer, but Bing is no less extraordinary, he is truly the number one master of song.

As for James Kaplan's book, he said that "I Love You Samantha" is by far the best solo number from *High Society*, "a tour de force of great vocalizing."

**Bing sings of his love for "Samantha" as he dresses for a party.**

He also praised Bing's duets with Armstrong and Sinatra. From then on, he criticized Bing frequently. He stated that Bing showed very little emotion in the songs Burke and Van Heusen wrote for him, specifically by saying to Burke that the sentence "I love you" should never be used in any of the lyrics. ("Sinatra - The Chairman", page 71). Kaplan left out the whole text Van Heusen wrote and caught up a loose sentence completely untrue and out of context, which distorted what he really said. The truth of the matter is that the repetition of "I love you" over and over again may sound corny and, with few exceptions, make a song hackneyed. Van Heusen's statement is quite clear in what he wrote in the foreword of Laurence J. Zwisohn's book, "Bing Crosby – A Lifetime of Music".

*"He also had many likes and dislikes one of which was a definite distaste for mushy love lyrics. In the year 1940, when I first started to write for him, the late and great Johnny Burke had already been writing for him for four years beginning in 1936 with a score which included "Pennies from Heaven". In that early day when I first arrived in Hollywood Johnny sought to brief me on things I should know about Bing Crosby. The first thing we discussed was Bing's dislike of mushy love songs. As a result the first love song I wrote for him did not have the declarative statement "I love you" as part of its lyric and neither did any other of my love songs. ("Bing Crosby - A Lifetime of Music", Foreword by James Van Heusen, page 5).*

We can also quote Bing's remarks on his distaste for silly songs in Gary Giddins' book: *The first order of business was to record the tunes from his films. Much of the material was grim, expressing the mood if not the substance of the Depression in narratives of lost, doomed, or betrayed love. Bing's stout delivery, cradled in richly detailed arrangements, is at once heroic and haunted. He told an interviewer that same year "I won't sing sappy songs. A crooner gets enough criticism. There's no reason to invite more barbs by singing mush." (*"Bing Crosby, A Pocketful of Dreams, The Early Years 1903-1940", Gary Giddins, page 324).

"I Love You Samantha" - the song Kaplan designated the best solo number from *High Society* - does of course contain the phrase "I Love You"! Kaplan also seems to be unaware that much more has been said about Bing's top-notch interpretation of Cole Porter's song, such as Tony Bennett's highly favorable appraisal considering "I Love You Samantha" as the best performance ever done by a popular singer. In a nutshell, in 2003, the Artist's Choice teamwork interviewed Bennett in order for him to select for the CD "Music that Matters for Him" his favorite 16 all-time best performances:

*We sat down with him in his apartment overlooking Central Park to talk about his favorite performances of the 20th century. Here is* (a summary) *of what he had to say: I chose this record for this collection for one reason: As a student, listening to popular singers, I think this is the best performance ever done by a popular singer. I have always been taken by how Bing just hummed his way into the introduction of this song, and then came in on a different key. I still don't know how he did it – but that doesn't matter. It is a beautiful, perfect pop recording.* He also kept on remarking that *Bing had a singular style of instrumentalization and timing and he was a master communicator with the audience. Let's put it this way: If you had the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Madonna, and Elton John and you put them altogether, they still wouldn't be as big as Bing Crosby was on his own. He had two one-hour shows networked daily across the country, and local stations in every city played his music extensively, every day. Every singer – from Perry Como to Dean Martin to Frank Sinatra to*

*myself – learned their craft from Bing.* ("Artist's Choice, Tony Bennett, Music That Matters for Him", 2003, Sony Music Entertainment, Manufactured by Columbia Records, CK 89293).

Kaplan continued his criticism by saying that "as Bing Crosby said, any singer worthy of the name is acting when he sings a song." But according to Kaplan's view this didn't happen to Crosby, "who managed to blend emotional believability and clinical coolness in his delivery, inspiring the sentiment more than enacting it." On the contrary, Sinatra's gift was to give you the emotion in the moment, to make you feel he was feeling it as you were. ("Sinatra: The Chairman", page 242). In other words, Bing expressed very little feelings in any song. Bing Crosby was always considered a romantic singer par excellence, a singer capable of expressing deep feelings in a song, and the statement that he was cold in real life seems to be unfounded.

The Brazilian movie and music critic Salvyano Cavalcanti de Paiva wrote two long articles about Bing Crosby for O Globo newspaper. In the first article he states: *the tenderness, the rich voice, broad and in tune, the melodic beauty, the romantic lyrics, there will never be another Bing Crosby.* ("Musical Film Singers" "Cancioneiros do Filme Musical", O Globo, March 20, 1973). On the second article he exclaimed: *Ah, the Bing Crosby songs! Nostalgia and delicacy, touching rendition and excitement too, a melodic and a romantic voice* ("Filmes e Canções de Bing Crosby", O Globo, January 15, 1974). And, quoting Joe Franklin, *Bing Crosby was the most romantic balladeer of all time.*

In an article on Bing published in 2001, Gary Giddins declared *his versions of late-19th-century and early-20th-century songs are oddly compelling, and it is difficult to imagine another singer – Sinatra, for example – attempting them; I once saw an opera expert reduced to tears by Crosby's "Sweetheart of Sigma Chi"* (Gary Giddins, "The Unsung King of Song", January 28, 2001).

On page 118, Kaplan wrote that it was part of an illusion to think that Frank and Bing were friends. According to Kaplan, Sinatra felt intimidated by his old-time idol, who was so cool and aloof offstage that even Bob Hope, his comedy partner for a long time, would say after Bing's death, *you know, I never liked Bing. He was a son of a bitch.* ("The Chairman", page 118). He certainly borrowed his remark from the book "Bob Hope, Entertainer of The Century" by Richard Zoglin, which is included in his bibliography. This book was reviewed in BING magazine, and there's no need to mention that its thesis was clearly refuted. Norman Wolfe referring to Shepherd's and Slatzer's book "The Hollow Man", portraying Bing as a cold and calculating manipulator of friends and a philanderer neglectful of wife and children, states that Bob Hope dismissed the book as: "Hearsay. They didn't know Bing Crosby." (Norman Wolfe, "Troubador, Bing Crosby and the Invention of Pop Singing", ICC Publication, page 395).

We have never found any mention in all of the good books on Sinatra that he felt intimidated by Bing's coolness off stage. To my knowledge, quite the opposite. Kaplan's statement seems to be unfounded. We understand that this intimidation was actually <u>on stage</u> and had nothing to do with coldness. Michael Feinstein was right in his analysis in the liner notes of the CD "Bing Sings the Sinatra Songbook": *I sometimes find it impossible to take my eyes off of Bing because of his preternatural ease and total control, while I sometimes find Frank uncomfortable and pushing too much in contrast. Perhaps he was simply intimidated by his old idol. (Michael Feinstein, "Bing Sings the Sinatra Songbook").*

Kaplan quotes George Jacobs' (Sinatra's servant) book, "Mr. S: My Life with Frank Sinatra" as saying that the greatest humiliation towards him by John F. Kennedy was that Kennedy stayed at Bing's home. Bing was a Republican, an Eisenhower and a Nixon man, though Bing had supported Kennedy. Kaplan stressed that in spite of Frank's veneration for Bing and the polite friendship between them, Bing was no less aloof to Frank than he was to the rest of the world, despite their brilliant work of both in *High Society* as well as on TV and radio appearances, there was an iron-like competition between them (James Kaplan, "The Chairman", page 536).

Kaplan asks if Frank liked Dean Martin and if Dean liked Frank, and the answer is "yes, very much". But according to him *both would rather have a molar extracted, sans anesthesia, than look the other in the eye. The same, and then some, held true for the way both Sinatra and Martin felt about Bing Crosby. Both had long idolized him; Dean had stolen from him; and Frank had recently resented him. And Bing, the perfect idol, was even further—light years away—from doing anything like expressing feelings like (as he thought of them) those warm-blooded Italian boys.* (James Kaplan, "The Chairman", page 669).

First of all there was a friendly rivalry between Frank and Bing. They were not close friends, but were good friends. Bing helped Frank in the start of his career. Sinatra's daughter Tina was very perceptive on her comments about their friendship and Bing's noble feelings towards Sinatra, which contradicts Kaplan's unwarranted assertion that Bing couldn't care less for Frank: *Quite early in his career, Bing took Frank under his wing and that made a lasting friendship. For some reason he really liked my dad and wanted to see him succeed. He wasn't threatened by Dad. Bing was at the top of the charts then, so there was reason to be threatened, and Bing didn't care* (Tina Sinatra, "The Frank Sinatra Collection, Classic Duets", Capitol 72435-42771-2-2).

Second, the much talked about rivalry between them was caused by both their fan clubs and by the media as well. In the letter that Bing wrote to Frank published in BING magazine, Bing mentioned the so-called rivalry made up by the press. Both laughed at the obstinate dispute between their heated admirers. For those who claim that Bing was cold in real life, as stated persistently by Kaplan and other detractors, it's worth mentioning the nice words Bing addressed to Frank in that letter, even counseling him about some aspects of show business. What Frank really detested was the yellow press gossips, capable of stirring up trouble between them. We don't think there was an iron-like competition, but a wholesome competition instead.

When we stand up for an artist we love, we can't get carried away by our enthusiasm and dream up fanciful stories. We have to stick to the facts! James Kaplan asserted that Frank Sinatra was the most important figure in 1945. Nothing can be further from the truth. We could agree with him if he had said the early sixties, but the forties were Bing's heyday. Peter Hamill mentions in his book an interview with Sinatra in the seventies, in which Sinatra said *You can't imagine how big Bing Crosby was. He was the biggest thing that ever happened in this country. In records, on radio and in the movies. Everybody wanted to be Bing Crosby, including myself.* (Peter Hamill, "Why Sinatra Matters", page 105).

According to Ulanov's book*: in Jimmy Fidler's poll to select the outstanding personality in the world, above Frank Sinatra, above General Eisenhower, above President Truman, above the Pope, they elected Bing Crosby their favorite person.* (Barry Ulanov, "The Incredible Crosby", page 284).

We can also refer to Sinatra's biographer Arnold Shaw in his book "Sinatra, Twentieth Century Romantic": *However, despite Sinatra's hits, polemics and uproar, 1945 was a better year for Bing Crosby than for Frank. Variety published as the main front page headline: Bing was the biggest box-office success in 1945, referring to the Groaner as "the most important person in show business.* (Arnold Shaw, "Sinatra, Twentieth Century Romantic", page 104).

Summarizing Kaplan's book in relation to the comments on Bing Crosby, his greatest compliment to Bing was about "I Love You Samantha". He could have done as Peter Hamill in his book where there is not a single negative criticism to Bing, only compliments. Even considering Frank Sinatra as the greatest singer of all, Hamill doesn't try to ridicule Bing and doesn't make up non-existent facts to reduce him as a singer. In the small book by Erick Galindo, he refers to Hamill's book about Sinatra's admiration for Bing: *In his book "Why Sinatra Matters", journalist and essayist Pete Hamill quotes Sinatra as saying, "The thing about Bing was, he made you think you could do it, too". Sinatra's admiration of Crosby extended to more than just his vocal talents. Of Crosby's inherent charm Sinatra stated, "He was so relaxed, so casual. If he thought the words were getting too stupid or something, he just went buh-ba, buh-ba, booo. He even walked like it was no effort. He was so good, you never saw the rehearsals, the effort, the hard work. It was like Fred Astaire. Fred made you think you could dance too. I don't mean just me. I mean millions and millions of people. You saw Fred dance, you heard Bing sing, and it was like you were doing it. After a movie you saw guys in the street dancing. You hear them singing to their girls. It was amazing, what those men did, Bing and Fred. Some people, they danced and sang right through the f***king Depression. Every time Bing sang, it was a duet, and you were the other singer.* (Erick Galindo, "Frank Sinatra: A Biography: A Short Guide to the Life and Adventures of Frank Sinatra", Hyperink, July 30, 2012).

To be fair to James Kaplan, he also criticizes Sinatra strongly, not as a singer, but as a person. Kaplan says that Sinatra was terribly arrogant, had fits of rage to the point of kicking up everything around him and quotes Arnold Shaw's book as saying that: *there was no one more difficult to handle. Each time you saw Frank, it was like meeting a different guy. How he treated you depended solely on how he felt at that moment and what was bugging him. And, believe me, he has a lot to bug him.* (James Kaplan, The Chairman, page 243).

Bing was a man of contradictions the same way Sinatra was, but who isn't? It has been said that Bing was aloof, but let us agree there's a clear-cut difference between aloofness and coldness. According to Phil Harris, Bing's closest friend*: He's an individualist. I think that's why Bing has been so successful and there isn't anybody like him. A lot of people don't understand him because he goes his own way, minds his own business and lives his own life.* (Charles Thompson, "Bing - The Authorized Biography", page 242). And in keeping with Phil Harris, Rosemary Clooney declared: *It's been said that if Bing had died at 93 it wouldn't be fair. That's the way I feel. He was the kindest man in the world. We got along so well even though we had*

*opposing political views. He avoided unpleasant topics with me, as he avoided unpleasant people.* (Rosemary Clooney, quoted from an article by John Stark – San Francisco Examiner, August 9, 1978, published by BINGANG in September 1978).

**Joao Daudt Oliveira**

*(Editor: Joao lives in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil and he was concerned about his spelling and he asked me to check it. The translation from Portuguese made some extracts from the book seem a little strange and checking up on these on Amazon (using the "Look Inside" option), I accidentally finished up buying the Kindle version! There didn't seem to be an option to return this so I finished up reading it on a recent cruise.)*

## 2. He's Got Rhythm: The Life and Times of Gene Kelly by Cynthia and Sara Brideson (University Press of Kentucky; 2017), 578 pages, hardcover, ISBN-10: 0813169348, ISBN-13: 978-0813169347.

**Martin McQuade takes a look at this new book about Gene Kelly.**

### Busier than Beavers

*He's Got Rhythm: The Life and Times of Gene Kelly* by Cynthia and Sara Brideson offers background information regarding the star's 1962-63 ABC TV series, *Going My Way,* co-starring Leo G. Carroll. The team of Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher of *Leave It to Beaver* fame conceived the spinoff of the beloved multi-Oscar winning film.

"*The first season was well received and it appeared that it might be picked up for another. Gene was discontented with the show, however, considering his role passive in spite of Joe Connelly's assertion that O'Malley was a fighter (particularly after the Catholic Church and the TV studio put restrictions on the program, cleansing it of much of its initial edge.) Furthermore, Gene found "the weight of the lines he was expected to learn shear drudgery." The shooting schedule was fast paced, even for Gene, leaving him only two days to memorize each script. The rigidity of the daily routine also made him balk. One worker on the set, commenting on working with Gene, snorted, "Holy father? More like a holy terror!" Gene may have had his qualms about the program, but he still regretted its cancellation. It could not compete with The Beverly Hillbillies, a sitcom that shared its time slot. "It was too gentle," Gene said of Going My Way. "It was a nice, clean family show." Ironically, when Going My Way went into reruns during the summer, the ratings skyrocketed. But it was too late to revive the program; the cast had already been released and had moved on to other projects."*

**Gene working with Bing and Marilyn Maxwell on the Kraft Music Hall in 1944.**

The other projects would have provided yet another connection to Bing.

"*By the beginning of 1963, Gene had agreed to another professional venture that brought him back to the big screen. He signed to become a part of a company Frank Sinatra formed with Warner Bros. In his contract, he agreed to produce one film, appear in another, and direct a third. Frank would perform in all three pictures. The first project, Robin and the Seven Hoods, was designed as a satire on Chicago during Prohibition. In the cast were Bing Crosby and Frank's Rat Pack friends Sammy Davis, Jr. and Dean Martin. "I must say they're most agreeable to work with," Gene commented. "Trouble is they've spread themselves so wide that to get them all together at once takes more logistic ability than Eisenhower's on D-Day. For a supposed lazy, drawling group, they're busier than beavers."*

*Frank, who was living in New York, was a difficult man to pin down. The singer kept postponing rehearsals, leading Gene to lose patience and tell the studio head Jack Warner he was going to quit. Warner kept "reminding me how friendly I was with Frank, to which I replied I was more than friendly, I really loved him, and that was the reason I was walking out...If I stayed on as a kind of paid laborer, our relationship would be over." Gene dropped out of Robin and the Seven Hoods as well as his other two prospective projects. Frank and Gene remained on good terms; their friendship actually deepened over the years.*"

Perhaps there was some compensation in the "Bathtub Scene" on the 1965 RCA soundtrack LP of Sid and Marty Kroft's New York World's Fair puppet extravaganza *Les Poupees of Paris.* This cut features Frank, Dean, Gene and Bing, in perhaps his briefest appearance ever on record.

**Martin McQuade**

*(Editor: Picking up on the Robin and 7 Hoods involvement, on October 15, 1963, Bing wrote to his agent Bob Coryell as follows:*

> …Quite privately, I'm very disturbed about the removal of Gene Kelly as the producer. This was one of the major factors which influenced my desire to make the film. I felt that Kelly would be an outstanding producer of a musical show, and the initial work that he did - the preparation and everything else inclined me to think that he was really going to have a fine musical.
>
> I don't know what will happen now since he's been removed, although the elements are still there. It just depends upon whose hands it falls into. I believe it's going to be Sinatra and Koch.
>
> I mention this because if there's any problem about the time that I'm supposed to be working on the picture, I'd just as soon get out of it - although this is something that I would hold back and not reveal until you have sounded them out and gotten back to me.
>
> Maybe before you talk to anybody, you and I should get together on the phone, or I can come by the office, or you can come by the studio.
>
> Give me a ring.
>
> Bing

*As we know, a satisfactory solution was reached.)*

## Finding Christmas on an elevator at London Drugs

**Wayne Moriarty writing on The Province website in British Columbia on December 22 last year saw the light in an unlikely place.**

Christmas comes easy for kids.

Wake up. Open a bunch of presents.

Eat. Play. Love.

The day may involve a church service and wearing that suit that no longer fits, but for the most part, if you are under the age of 13, as I said, Christmas comes easy.

It's not always so for adults.

My children are grown up and have lived far away for the past 10 years, so I haven't been getting that intoxicating jolt of jolly that hits every Dec. 25.

I've had to find the magic of the season in ways that don't involve family.

Last year, I stumbled upon Christmas in an elevator at London Drugs.

Across from me as we rode to the parkade was a young man with a beard to his chest, an oversized jacket, shorts and work boots. He looked to be about, I don't know, 22.

His name, I later learned, was Clyde Adams.

"I didn't expect to find someone like you carrying that," I said to the stranger. The "that" in this case was a freshly pressed slab of vinyl dedicated to the Christmas music of one Bing Crosby.

DL 8128
Merry Christmas
DECCA
RECORDS
Adeste Fidelis • I'll Be Home for Christmas • White Christmas • God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen • It's Beginning to Look Like Christmas
Silent Night • Jingle Bells (with the Andrews Sisters) • Christmas in Killarney • Santa Claus is Comin' to Town (with the Andrews Sisters)
Faith of Our Fathers • Silver Bells (with Carole Richards) • Mele Kalikimaka (Merry Christmas) (with the Andrews Sisters)

"That's my dad's generation," I said.

In the softest, sweetest voice, Clyde told me that listening to Bing on vinyl reminded him of his grandfather — that it helped him find the magic.

I gave Clyde my business card, and shortly after received a beautiful email elaborating on his Christmas with grandpa. Following are a few edited excerpts from Clyde's message to me.

"As far back as I can remember my late grandfather, Victor Adams, absolutely loved the Christmas holidays. He would string the house with lights and, of course, play Christmas music on his turntable: polka time Christmas, Elvis Christmas in Hawaii, Beach Boys Christmas and, of course, Bing Crosby.

"On Christmas Day, my grandfather and grandmother, Primrose, would host a party — a rather large party. I remember aunts, uncles, great aunts, great uncles, cousins and close friends of the family filling the basement with laughter, dancing and stories. Guests would come and go — handshakes, hugs and well-wishes were everywhere.

"In the corner near the fireplace was my grandfather's bar. From there he would keep everyone's glasses full. The basement was decorated with all the trimmings right down to mistletoe. And always, in the background, the turntable would be playing Christmas albums.

"That basement, full of family and loved ones, is a cherished memory.

"Stumbling upon the Bing Crosby Merry Christmas record may not seem like a big deal in today's world when all you have to do is log into your iTunes account

and buy a digital copy. But I didn't want that. I wanted the vinyl, the record.

"My grandfather has been gone for 20 years now, but the love he had for all of us is especially felt at Christmas time. When I close my eyes and listen to the Christmas songs he loved to sing, I can hear him. I imagine being five again, sitting on his knee hugging him while he sings."

"You know, I used to take pride in being a bit of a Grinch every Christmas. But that's changing. Each year, it seems, I become less and less of a Scrooge. Now I have my nieces and nephews and Christmas is in bloom again."

As I said, Christmas comes easy for kids.

So many of the rest of us have to work at it a little bit. That may mean volunteering at a soup kitchen or carolling at a seniors home.

Or it may mean buying some Bing on vinyl and losing yourself in the music.

Merry Christmas everyone.

Big love, Wayne

**Wayne Moriarty**

# Celluloid Crosby

**David Lobosco takes a look at one of your Editor's favourite Bing films.**

When I first started watching movie musicals (and Bing Crosby movies for that matter), the 1946 film *Blue Skies* was my favorite musical. As the years have gone by, other musicals have pushed *Blue Skies* down on the list, but I still love the film. There is really not much to not like about the film. The film had it all from beautiful Technicolor to over two dozen Irving Berlin songs. It had two of the giants of the musicals with the singing ability of Bing Crosby and the dancing wizardry of Fred Astaire. Throw in a beautiful leading lady like Joan Caulfield, and there was no reason why *Blue Skies* would not be one of the biggest musicals of 1946.

The movie that was originally proposed was a lot different from the movie the film eventually became. Leading lady Joan Caulfield was the protégé of Mark Sandrich, who directed many of the Astaire-Ginger Rogers musicals. Sandrich was originally slated to direct this film, but died of a heart attack during pre-production and Stuart Heisler was drafted in to replace him. Heisler wanted Caulfield replaced, but Crosby, who had approval of his leading ladies, insisted she remain in the film. Reportedly Heisler and Crosby did not get on together, and the following year Heisler would direct Susan Hayward in *Smash-Up, the Story of a Woman* which was

**Bing romances Joan Caulfield with "Blue Skies".**

based on an unflattering portrayal of Dixie Lee Crosby.

Also Paul Draper, a Broadway dancer, was supposed to star with Bing, but he left the film early on as well. Bing and Draper did not get along. Crosby was laid back in his way of filming, while Paul approached every scene and nuance of the movie as if he was choreographing an intricate ballet. Draper did not endear himself to Crosby either by trying to get Joan Caulfield removed from the picture. He was constantly complaining about her lack of singing and dancing ability. During the first week of production Draper's speech impediment and his trenchant criticism of Caulfield's dance ability led Crosby to insist on his replacement by Fred Astaire who, then forty-seven, had already decided that this would be his final film and that he would retire

In common tradition to many 1940s movies, most commonly found in the "film noir" genre, *Blue Skies* is told in flashback, starting in modern day setting at a radio station, Broadcast Network of America in New York City's Rockefeller Center, where Jed Potter (Fred Astaire), a former dancer, now a radio personality, relates his life story and career to his listeners, a story with a beginning but without a finish. Dating back circa 1919 following World War I finds Jed attracted to Mary O'Hara (Joan Caulfield), a girl, a "very pretty girl," working in the chorus. He invites her to accompany him for dinner at a night club owned by Johnny Adams (Bing Crosby), his Army buddy. Almost immediately, Mary is attracted to Johnny, but in spite of Jed's warning that Johnny is not the marrying kind, she cannot resist him. Johnny and Mary marry, and during their union have a daughter, Mary Elizabeth (Karolyn Grimes). All goes well until Mary finds that Jed is right in his assumption of Johnny being selfish and unstable, buying and selling nightclubs (one of them called "Top Hat") at a moment's notice, and unable to settle down in one place they could call home. After their divorce, Mary becomes engaged to Jed. Finding she's unable to marry Jed as she still loves Johnny, Mary disappears, leaving Johnny as well as Jed, through his narration, to wonder whatever became of her.

As Jed Potter relates his "album of Irving Berlin songs" to his radio listeners, movie viewers get treated to see and hear such classic tunes including: "A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody" (sung by chorus, danced by Fred Astaire); "I've Got My Captain Working for Me Now" (sung by Bing); "You'd Be Surprised" (sung by Olga San Juan); "All By Myself" (Crosby); "A Serenade to an Old-Fashioned Girl" (sung by Joan Caulfield); "Puttin' on the Ritz" (Astaire); "I'll See You in C.U.B.A." (Crosby and Olga San Juan); "A Couple of Song and Dance Men" (Astaire and Crosby); "You Keep Coming Back Like a Song" (Crosby); "Always" (chorus); "Blue Skies," "The Little Things in Life," "Not for All the Rice in China" (all sung by Crosby); "Russian Lullaby" (Chorus); "Everybody Step" (Crosby); "How Deep is the Ocean" (chorus); "Running Around in Circles" (Crosby); "Heat Wave" (sung by Olga San Juan/danced by Astaire); "Any Bonds Today" "This Is the Army, Mr. Jones", "White Christmas" and "You Keep Coming Back Like a Song" (all sung by Bing). "Mandy" and "Some Sunny Day" are other songs heard as background music.

Astaire's "Puttin' on the Ritz" number, where he dances to eight images of himself, is one of the great highlights. First introduced by Harry Richman for the 1930 musical, *Puttin' on the Ritz*, the original lyrics have been changed to fit the Astaire style as well as the changing of times. Crosby and Astaire also provide fine moments with their joint collaboration as "A Couple of Song and Dance Men." Billy De Wolfe supplies much of the comedy relief as Johnny's partner and assistant. Aside from being the love interest to Olga San Juan, he does a five-minute one-man comedy routine as Mrs. Murgatroyd.

While the story tends to get corny at times, it does get better with its passage of time and its assortment of fine songs. Aside from Crosby's singing, his sentimental moment where he meets with his little girl (Grimes) again is well done, along with Astaire's dancing, which is always first rate. Fred briefly breaks away from his traditional character when he becomes a troubled dancer who turns to liquor after being jilted. Joan Caulfield, then new to the movies, would work again with Crosby in *Welcome Stranger* (1947), an underrated drama with songs. Crosby and Astaire wouldn't work together again (except for four radio shows together in 1948, 1951 and 1952) until being reunited for their TV special, "A Couple of Song and Dance Men" (CBS, 1975). Also in 1975, the two would make a great album together of the same name that I recommend.

Back to the movie *Blue Skies* though, here is an extract of what Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* thought of the film in his October 17, 1946 review:

> ...There's a lot to be said for any picture in the musical comedy groove which adheres to the oft-forgotten dictum that a film should be seen as well as heard, that variety and vitality in the visual are the stuff of which musicals are made. And when the evidence of that adherence is so enthusiastically displayed as it is by Messrs. Astaire and Crosby in "Blue Skies," you may depend upon being entertained.
>
> The story? Let's not argue about it. It's a standard and harmless little thing about the casual and genial competition between two song-and-dance men for a girl. ...But it does serve as an adequate hanger for some sparkling and stimulating turns of song, dance and general farcifying to Mr. Berlin's familiar tunes. Best of the lot, for our wampum, is Mr. Astaire's electrifying dance to that ancient and honorable folk-song, "Puttin' on the Ritz." Turned out in striped pants and top hat, Mr. A. makes his educated feet talk a persuasive language that is thrilling to conjugate...And that's not his only

contribution. In company with the redoubtable Bing, he doubles in song while that nipper doubles in dance in a comedy gem, written especially for the occasion, entitled "Two Song-and-Dance Men…Naturally, Mr. Crosby, as the rolling-stone character, has his share of the spotlight and holds it with aggressive modesty. He makes something lively, slick and novel of "Cuba," along with Olga San Juan, and groans with his customary competence a new hit "You Keep Coming Back Like a Song." Joan Caulfield, the "you" of this ditty, is loveliest and passive as the girl who stands none too seriously or firmly between Crosby and Astaire.

For the rest, there are no less than twenty of Mr. Berlin's melodious tunes jammed here and there onto the sound-track, either as production numbers or incidental bits. And we must say that Robert Emmett Dolan has directed the music as distinctively as Stuart Heisler has directed the actors—or maybe more so. That's why they sound so good…

When I showed my wife *Blue Skies* years ago, she thought it was corny but this movie has so much going for it. It features a unique time in American history – between both World Wars – a period that is often over looked in film. The movie also paints a realistic portrayal of what a struggle marriage can be sometimes. Yes, the marriage of Bing and Joan Caulfield was a show biz marriage, but if you looked closely at what broke them up, it was the same problems that face married people even today – lack of communication and trust. For a 1940s musical this film deals with some serious subject matter, which you tend to overlook, because the star of the film is the Irving Berlin music, and the perfect performances of Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire who were just a couple of song and dance men!

**David Lobosco** **davidlobosco@yahoo.com**

## Anything Goes (1936, Paramount, 92 minutes)

**The 53rd annual Cinecon Classic Film Festival was held at the Egyptian Theater in Hollywood from August 31 to September 4. It's the longest-running film festival that shows films from the Silent Days up to the 1950s. This year there were some vintage TV shows that were unseen for more than 50 years. People came from all over the world for this five-day festival which showed more than 50 vintage movies. There were documentaries on early Hollywood Studios and celebrities as well as shorts, cartoons, full-length features and nitrate, all mostly on original 35mm film.**

**On September 3, Bing's film *Anything Goes* (1936) was shown and our member Maureen Solomon wrote the program notes. Here's what she had to say.**

One of Cole Porter's biggest hits on Broadway in 1934 was requisitioned for the 1936 Paramount film. Ethel Merman originated the role of Reno on the Broadway stage and it was the first of five Cole Porter Broadway musicals in which she starred. The English-born star and love interest, Ida Lupino was 18 years old when *Anything Goes* opened.

Since Porter's lyrics were some of the most risqué on the New York stage, many of the songs such as "You'd Be So Easy to Love," "It's De-Lovely," "Let's Misbehave," and "Blow, Gabriel, Blow" were jettisoned. However, "You're the Top," "I Get a Kick out of You," and strains of "All Through the Night" remain. Other tunes were written by Frederick Hollander and Leo Robin ("My Heart and I"), Hoagy Carmichael and Edward Heyman ("Moonburn") and Hollander, Richard Whiting and Robin (Shanghai-De-Ho").

Nightclub chanteuse Reno Sweeney (Merman) is sailing to England with her chorines when friend Billy Crocker (Crosby) becomes besotted by a young heiress Hope Harcourt (Lupino) whom he believes is in distress. After running away from a pending marriage, she is being brought back to England by her father's associate, Lord Oakleigh (Arthur Treacher), a proper Englishman who likes to note American slang in his little black book. Billy becomes a stowaway to save Hope and perhaps win her heart. Also sailing is "Moonface Martin" a con man known as Public Enemy # 13, played by Charles Ruggles, and his confidante, Bonnie (Grace Bradley.) To complicate matters, Billy is mistaken for 'Snake Eyes' Johnson who was to have made it on board ship to meet up with Moonface. In order to keep his identity secret from the police, his Wall Street boss Mr. Whitney (Robert McWade), and the captain, Billy has to don a series of disguises and also woo his beloved. Luckily, he meets up with gangster Moonface, who is dressed as a priest. He's more than able to help Billy find suitable duds, a ticket, and a doctored passport. Meanwhile, Reno is diverting Oakleigh, resulting in a mutual attraction. Too bad a song couldn't have been inserted here.

Other notables in the cast are Margaret Dumont, whose Pekinese dog supplies a beard for Billy, the perpetually sloshed Jack Norton, 'Little Rascal' Jerry Tucker, John Carradine and Jack Mulhall. Keye Luke and Philip Ahn play Chinese 'celestials' whom Moonface and Billy engage in a game of strip poker, spiriting away their clothing to escape the captain and authorities. Chill Wills as one of the singing Avalon Boys and Matt McHugh round out the cast. It all ends in a big bizarre production number, "Shanghai-De-Ho" on a multilevel stage with gaggles of girls and mirrored floors, hardly possible on a dock in Southampton. Crosby becomes part of the show and sings the final number with Merman in a hodgepodge that recounts some of the story. Billy gets his girl, Reno gets her guy, and Moonface's number comes up. In the most memorable number, "You're the Top," Porter rewrote new lyrics. Merman sings to Crosby - "You're the top ..... You're Paul Whiteman's tummy!" To which Bing replies - "No more! You should see him!"

It's a clever reference as Crosby's first big break was as one of the Rhythm Boys in Paul Whiteman's Orchestra during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Bing's comedic performance in "Anything Goes" catapulted him into a slew of quality films including the "Road" pictures with Bob Hope and secured his place in the pantheon of Hollywood royalty. Treacher is well remembered as a singing/dancing partner with Shirley Temple, and as co-host on the Merv Griffin Show. Grace Bradley retired from films and worked with her husband William "Hopalong Cassidy" Boyd for many years, representing him at collectors shows long after his passing. After having graduated from platinum blonde ingénue roles, Lupino became one of Hollywood's best known actresses and director of film and TV. The film was later renamed "Tops Is the Limit" for television release because of the 1956 big screen remake starring Crosby and Mitzi Gaynor. One of Cole Porter's most brilliant scores, "Anything Goes" is still being produced in revivals and tours all over the world.

**Maureen Solomon**

*(Editor: Well done, Maureen! The film was released in January 1936 and the New York Times was a bit sniffy about it, saying:*

> Paramount uncorked its pent-up version of *Anything Goes* at the Paramount Theatre yesterday and instead of an exuberant pop and a merry fizz, there was merely a gentle sigh...Bing Crosby is an acceptable substitute for the show's William Gaxton in almost every subdivision except that in which he joins Miss Merman in "You're The Top". It doesn't seem possible but Mr. Crosby croons it.
> (*The New York Times*, February 6, 1936)

*However the showbiz bible Variety was happier.*

> Cole Porter's lyrics, which were the original essence and chief asset of the original stage 'Anything Goes,' have been sacrificed for and replaced by plot motion in this Paramount film adaptation...Ethel Merman comes from the original cast and her job in the picture equals her job in the stage version, which means aces. Crosby in the Billy Gaxton juve lead makes it more important than the latter did, because of the extra territory taken in by his singing...
>
> Miss Merman starts the musical section off on the correct gam with 'Kick,' and from then on it's a crossfire of solo and double singing by Miss Merman and Crosby. Even though they haven't as bright a set of lyrics to play with, and despite that the novelty number is no longer quite novel, they do a bang-up job with their 'You're the Top' duet. Crosby is fine singing "Sailor Beware" alone and working in with the three ship's crew members (The Pug-Uglies) who sing as a trio, and he's also there as usual when it comes to getting his quota of laughs. And there's also a few sotto voce cracks in his vocal swingin' for the special benefit of the boys at the Famous Door. .
>
> As directed by Lewis Milestone everything moves along swiftly. On the whole, as screen entertainment and as musical adaptation, Par's 'Goes' will do.
> (*Variety*, February 12, 1936)

*Maureen mentioned in an email to me that in years past she had met Ethel Merman, Ida Lupino, Grace Bradley, Arthur Treacher, and Jack Mulhall among the stars of the film and that it was wonderful to see these performers in their prime. )*

## Singing Out, Drama In, For Bing

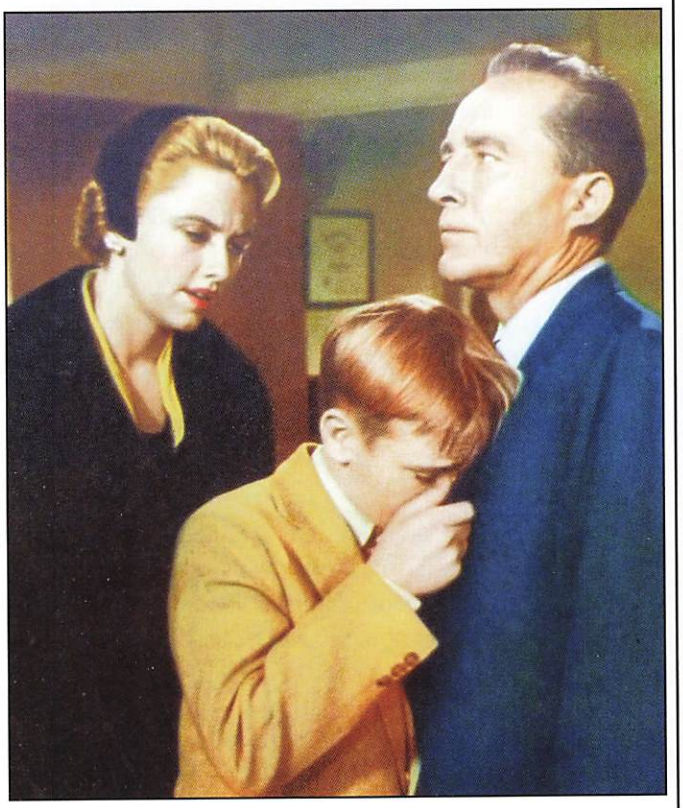
**John McElwee is a lifelong film enthusiast who began reviewing new movies in print at age 14. He has taught and lectured on film and has programmed extensively for colleges and universities. Since 2005 he has hosted the widely read Greenbriar Picture Shows website, which numbers site visits and page views in the millions. "Archiefit" writing on Crosby Fan World spotted Mr. McElwee's blog about one of Bing's lesser known films on the Greenbriar site on August 31 and we have great pleasure in reproducing it here with grateful thanks to all concerned.**

### Man On Fire (1957) Puts Crosby With Family Problems

Another dramatic lead for Bing Crosby, only this time no singing beyond a title tune during credits. He's a divorced dad intent on keeping a son his former wife wants back. *Man on Fire* was cheaply made at Metro (one million the negative cost, real economy for the Lion by 1957), though it was less their picture than Crosby's, his company having co-produced and largely calling shots. Bing had renewed lease from his Academy nom for *The Country Girl*, but still sold better as cheery and tuneful. Him doing *High Society* was socko, but dour and even angry through B/W slog here left red ink on

ledgers, his own and Metro's. *Man on Fire* was effective drama, Crosby fine in it, but seemed to ticket-buyers like Playhouse 90 blown up to theatre proportion. In fact, the story was earlier adapted to TV, so Bing doing it now had faint novelty beyond his essay of the part rather than Tom Ewell's for the tube. 1957 was not a good year for movies to play "small," audiences getting fill of that at home, and for free. Blockbusters were the lure, and a chamber piece, unless it was a fluke like *Marty*, had little hope for a breakout.

Crosby's "Earl Carleton" is bitter from the start over divorce having took place two years previous, and offscreen, so what we get is "after" character, no glimpse of who Earl was before the wife took off with another man. This leaves sour disposition unrelieved, Crosby hard put to lend any of signature charm and humor to downer content. I see more similarity between Bing and Elvis as vehicles are revisited. Serious scenes for both could be dicey because they did intense so ... intensely. Rage from these two could be unpredictable and not a little scary. Was it this way behind cameras? I'd hate to be one who ticked either off. Crosby was applauded (rightly) for casual air he brought to performing, but they sure weren't talking about moments where he lost temper. He had no fear of edgy. I assume there was more dramatic work later, for television if not features, him less a star than character man by the 60/70's.



**A dramatic scene from *Man on Fire*. (This is a reproduction from the lobby card – the film itself was in black and white.)**

Major point of interest in *Man on Fire* is Crosby interaction with screen son Malcolm Brodrick. It plays off contrast, and some similarities, to relationship we understood him to have with four boys at home, Bing himself not a demonstrative Dad by his own account. It's like he's acting out rapport on screen that he wanted in private life, the Crosby sons by 1957 known as ongoing problems for their father. All that's another story, of course, and too much for tackling here, but parallel does lend layers of interest to *Man on Fire*. Too bad the film is so poorly served by old and full-framed transfer TCM uses. There's been no DVD as yet, so this is all we have, and cropped as it is, *Man on Fire* evokes dramatic anthology off a 50's TV tray. There's similarity with 1956's *These Wilder Years*, an autumn tour for James Cagney in serious mien and looking for a son he sired long ago out of wedlock. Sapped of star dynamism and in same B/W as *Man on Fire*, the pics are first-cousins in terms of mature leads forging new direction, but overcome by skimpy production and underwhelming scripts. Crosby and Cagney were too long defined by established personas to tamper more than slightly with them. Their public, diminishing in any case, wanted them a certain way, and wouldn't abide departure (both *Man on Fire* and *These Wilder Years* lost money). Crosby was fortunate to have a television variety format to sustain his position for balance of a lifetime, the Christmas specials if nothing else a guarantee that he'd not entirely lose a following.

**John McElwee**

*(Editor: I have to say that 'Man on Fire' is one of my least favourite Crosby films although I must acknwledge that Bing did a first-class acting job.)*

ON JULY 4th IT'S-
BING with a BANG !
M-G-M presents A SOL C. SIEGEL PRODUCTION
BING CROSBY
MAN ON FIRE
INGER STEVENS · MARY FICKETT · E. G. MARSHALL
with MALCOLM BRODRICK · RICHARD EASTHAM
SCREEN PLAY BY RANALD MacDOUGALL
DIRECTED BY RANALD MacDOUGALL
STARTS TOMORROW
EXCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT AT
RKO PANTAGES, HOLLYWOOD
AND KEY CITIES
EVERYWHERE!

# One Sweet Letter From You

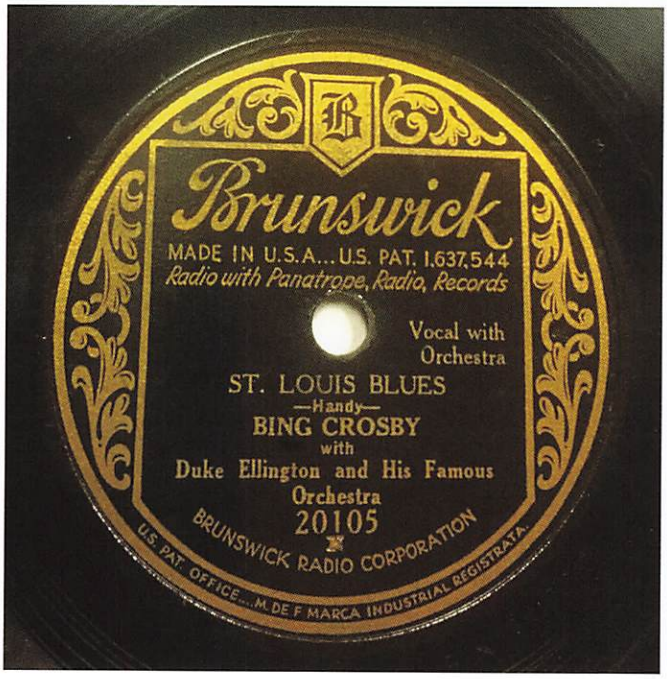
**Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters and emails received since the last issue**

**John Newton,** by email from Wilmington, Delaware, USA

…Just the other day a collector friend was visiting and I showed him something (that I may or may not have previously mentioned to you.)

An interesting example of label *changes* occurred with Bing's recording of "St. Louis Blues" with Duke Ellington's Orchestra.

On the original Brunswick label of Brunswick 20105, Bing's name appears more prominently, in slightly larger script, than Duke Ellington's Orchestra.




This record remained in Brunswick's catalog until the very end of the Brunswick label, but after Bing departed Brunswick to join Jack Kapp at American Decca (a move that threw Brunswick's management into a bit of turmoil and annoyance,) their labels shifted slightly, balancing the label credits . . . and on the 1935 label of "St. Louis Blues" Bing's name and that of Ellington's Orchestra then appeared in equally sized script, giving a slight demotion to Bing's prominence.

Then, still in the catalog, when Brunswick's labels changed from their Gold & Black labels to their Silver & Black label, Bing had another demotion . . . and this time his name appeared in smaller script than Duke Ellington's Orchestra, and stayed that way until the label's demise in 1939/1940.

Perhaps a bit of minutiae, but I've always found this sort of thing fascinating.

From memory, Brunswick was very much caught off guard by Bing's quick departure, so much so that Bing's photo appears as the prominent artist on the cover of Brunswick's September 1934 monthly release catalog . . . a month *after* Bing had already begun recording for the new Decca label.

Under normal circumstances, they would never have given prominence to an artist (their biggest selling vocal star) after he'd departed for a competing record company. Granted, such monthly catalogs were prepared a month or so in advance, but this will nevertheless illustrate how quickly Jack Kapp and Bing's departure occurred (along with a number of other Brunswick stars.)

I've also always found it interesting that quickly, by the end of 1934, Brunswick had dropped all but a scant handful of Bing's Brunswicks from their catalog and began to "re-issue" them on the various ARC labels - at reduced prices, to compete with Decca's cheaper prices (35 cents) versus Brunswick (75 cents).

Oddly, also illustrating their confusion at the time, in the month of December 1934, while Bing's recording of "Love in Bloom" was still available on Brunswick (at 75 cents), the very same recording was also by then available on Brunswick's sister ARC labels (at 35 cents or less). Obviously an instance where one part of the company is not aware of what another part of the same company is doing.

By the way, I just looked at the December 1934

monthly catalogs for Melotone and Perfect labels, among the various ARC labels that re-issued a number of Bing's Brunswicks, rather quickly, only a few months after he left Brunswick. These were priced at only 25 cents, under-cutting newly formed Decca's pricing of 35 cents.

**Bob Phillips,** by email from Fairfax, Virginia, USA

This year has some interesting history dates.

1937 (80 years ago) Bing started Bing Crosby Enterprises at 9028 Sunset Boulevard in his new office building.

1947 (70 years ago) was the first radio show done from magnetic tape. (recorded Aug 1947, aired 1 Oct 1947)

1952 (65 years ago) Bing inspected his video tape recorder. The first to record TV. It was at 9030 Sunset.

And, of course,

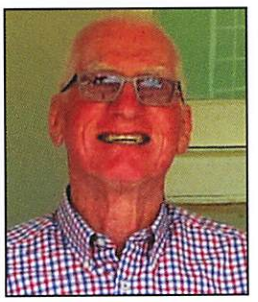
1977 (40 years ago) Bing died

**John Walton,** by email from Langworth, Lincoln, UK

I thought you might be interested in *Crooners Club,* a series of radio programmes I'm presenting from September 1st for the online station *Serenade Radio*. The station is an initiative from a group of experienced radio professionals who have become frustrated by the virtual disappearance of yesterday's great songs and singers from current music schedules.

*Crooners Club* will air initially every Friday at midday for an hour. Bing will be featured every week. We're starting with 13 programmes, and we'll see where that takes us. The link to *Serenade Radio* is www.serenade-radio.com.

# A Note from Australia



**Graham Pascoe from Bathurst, NSW, Australia is here again with his thoughts on our last issue.**

Bob Phillips' article on the evolution of Bing's radio shows is fascinating and its revelation of the dedication and ingenuity of the people involved in their production is astounding. Over the years, Australians had the opportunity to hear some of the programs but I'm sure they would have been unaware that they were not listening to recordings of actual 'live' broadcasts.

Ironically, the last of the programs which went to air here was one of the 'early' programs referred to in Bob Phillips' article and it was Bing's death which inspired it. To say that Bing Crosby's death was a major media event in Australia would be one of the greatest understatements imaginable. Perhaps the most impressive tribute on Australian radio was on Melbourne's station 3UZ. On three consecutive three-hour morning sessions media personality Bert Newton devoted his programs to Bing and on the third, on Wednesday 19th October 1977, he included the complete *Philco Radio Time* of 19th February 1947 when Bing's guests were William Frawley, Leo McCarey and Judy Garland. He had played 'snippets' from that show the previous day.

About twenty-five years earlier, the monthly music magazine *Tempo* had a regular column titled 'On the beam with Telemike' and its March issue of 1952 quoted what the columnist described as 'dialogue of the month' from *The Bing Crosby Show* on station 2UW Sydney on Sunday:

Bing: So you were going to be in *Wedding Bells*?
Judy Garland: Yes, until Leo bit me.
Bing: Oh no, I'm sure he didn't. Leo is a gentle old lion with no teeth.
Judy: Well he sure had gums.

The origin of the broadcast was not stated but Judy Garland had been a guest on several sessions of *The Bing Crosby Show for Chesterfield* in 1950 and 1951 so it was probably a transcription from one of them. Station 2UW broadcast *The Bing Crosby Show* for twelve weeks from 22nd March. From 14th September another Sydney station 2KY included the show in its schedule (until January 1953) which lead *Tempo* to report: 'We rose to our collective feet the other Sunday night and gave three cheers when we discovered "The Bing Crosby Show" had re-appeared...and we can now listen to "Take It From Here" with the comfortable knowledge that we can expect a grand thirty minutes of entertainment to follow when it finishes [at 8.30 pm].'

Then on 23rd July 1953 the daily newspaper *The Sydney Morning Herald* advised its readers that *The Bing Crosby Show* would be heard on 2GB from 7.45 pm on Saturdays from 8th August. On the day of the first broadcast it published a large advertisement featuring a photo of Bing with the headline: 'See You To-night [sic] at 7.45, Folks, in the New "BING CROSBY SHOW" with my guest artists Bob Crosby and Cathy Crosby'. Two weeks later a similar ad. promised that the show would feature the Hollywood star James Stewart and on 3rd September it announced that 'BING CROSBY will be joined by his son, Gary, and the juvenile Bell Sisters on Saturday from 2GB. Bing and Gary will sing the comedy number "Fatherly Advice"'. Those shows were undoubtedly the CBS programs from 5th and 19th March and 2nd April 1952.

'Telemike' writing in *Tempo* was grateful: 'Our Red Seal Award of the month goes to 2GB for restoring to us "The Bing Crosby Show"...The first of these featuring Bob and Cathy Crosby as guest artists was a gem. In December 'Telemike' wrote of enjoying the funny show featuring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall who 'even joined Bing in a trio'.

Sydney station 2GB was one of the radio stations in a national network and the programs were almost certainly broadcast in other cities so many Australians must have enjoyed the benefits of the evolutions described by Bob Phillips. However, there had been some disquiet about Bing's determination to prerecord his shows. *The ABC Weekly* of 21st September 1946 reported that an executive of Sydney's 2UE had recently visited the USA and claimed that the imminent transcription of Bing's *Philco Radio Time* would lead to the disintegration of the US radio networks if other top-line artists followed suit.

HERE COME THE WAVES
BING CROSBY
BETTY HUTTON
SONNY TUFTS
ANN DORAN · GWEN CRAWFORD · NOEL NEILL · CATHERINE CRAIG · MARJORIE HENSHAW · Directed by MARK SANDRICH
A MARK SANDRICH PRODUCTION
A PARAMOUNT PICTURE

Like David Lobosco, I enjoyed *Here Come the Waves*. Its release in Australia in July 1945 was followed by mixed reviews but it had long runs in Sydney and Melbourne, as I reported in the winter 2013 edition of BING.

I didn't know that Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer had written a song 'My Mama Thinks I'm a Star' for the movie, which wasn't used. When I read David's opinion that the two love songs which Bing sang with Betty Hutton in the movie were 'really underrated love songs' I wondered how Australians had responded to them. I'll come back to that shortly, after considering how well the Aussie Decca with the other two songs fared.

Australians could not buy the records of the four movie songs until February 1946. 'Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive' backed by 'There's a Fella Waiting in Poughkeepsie' was reviewed in the 23-29 March issue of *Listener In* as deserving of readers' patronage and in *Music Maker* in April as an excellent example of the polished teamwork of Bing and the Andrews Sisters. The former song became a chart hit before it was released here because radio stations had been playing it on imported discs. It reached the number two spot in its six-month stay and was ranked by musicologist David Kent at number eleven in his top twenty-five songs of 1945. 'There's a Fella' also made our charts but not until it was released here. The record became Bing's second-best-selling record in 1946, his top seller of the year being 'Just a Prayer Away'.

**The Australian sheet music**

The other Decca with 'Let's Take the Long Way Home' and 'I Promise You' gave Bing two more chart hits but its lifetime sales were considerably less than the other disc. Other artists' recordings of two of the songs were also successful. Johnny Mercer and the Jack Payne Orchestra had made recordings of 'Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive' although Mercer's record was not available locally. Payne had a record of 'I Promise You' and HMV discs with Dinah Shore and Artie Shaw and his Orchestra with a vocal by Imogene Lynn were also on sale.

Anton's 'neglected gem' Bing's *Feels Good, Feels Right* album wasn't exactly neglected in Australia after the LP was released but I've not found any local review of it. Perhaps Bing had a special liking for his effort on 'The Way We Were'. In April 1977, when he was recuperating from his fall from the stage in Pasadena, he was interviewed by telephone by Mary Adams of radio station 3AW (Melbourne) and asked what contemporary songs he would like to record. He named 'The Way We Were', which he had recorded the previous year for the *Feels Good, Feels Right* album, and the Carpenters' songs. He also expressed a liking for some of the songs

of Neil Diamond and Paul Williams.

Several of the songs used in the album, including the title song, were also on an album which Australians could buy after Bing's death, a BBC Records import titled *The Final Chapter*, recorded in London with Gordon Rose and his Orchestra on 11th October, 1977.

I have no knowledge of how well *Feels Good, Feels Right* sold here but when the September 1979 *Australian Music Sales Catalogue* of long-playing, single and extended play records available in Australia including August releases was published it listed fifty Crosby LPs, some of which were double or multiple-disc sets. That album was one of them. Bing's number far exceeded those of the Beatles (25) and Frank Sinatra (27) but there were 61 of Elvis Presley and 53 of Klaus Wunderlich.

Bruce K. Hanson's story of how he became a Bing fan some considerable time after he watched *Holiday Inn* and *White Christmas* on television in the late sixties and early seventies reminded me that in the seventies Australians were like Bruce. Writing in *The Sydney Morning Herald* in December 1983, Jenny Tabakoff concluded that 'Bing Crosby is as much a part of TV Christmas as Santa Claus'. She had reviewed Sydney's television programs over the last ten years and learned that those two movies had been shown so many times that her conclusion was inevitable and 'If it wasn't Bing's movies it was his Christmas specials'. About the same time, Sydney's *Sun-Herald* suggested 'Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without Bing'. Incidentally, Bing's Aussie Decca of 'White Christmas', released in June 1943 didn't become his biggest-selling single here; that honour belongs to the next year's release of 'Silent Night, Holy Night' with 'Adeste Fideles' which more than doubled the former's sales by 1956.

Bruce wasn't the only person who secretly recorded soundtracks of Bing's movies. In the late 1940s a Crosby fan in Melbourne, who became one of the world's best-known collectors, went to a suburban cinema where *Pennies from Heaven* was being screened and with the aid of a mate used a tape recorder to record the soundtrack in the cinema's crying room. The manager ejected them but by returning with the mate's baby they were able to achieve their objective. Unfortunately, they had omitted to tell the baby's mother who, after discovering her child's absence, feared a kidnapping and called the police. On their return home, the triumphant recordists soon became red-faced as they explained their exploits to those who were less enthusiastic about the talents of Bing Crosby!

**Graham Pascoe** gpascoe34@bigpond.com

## Muddy Water

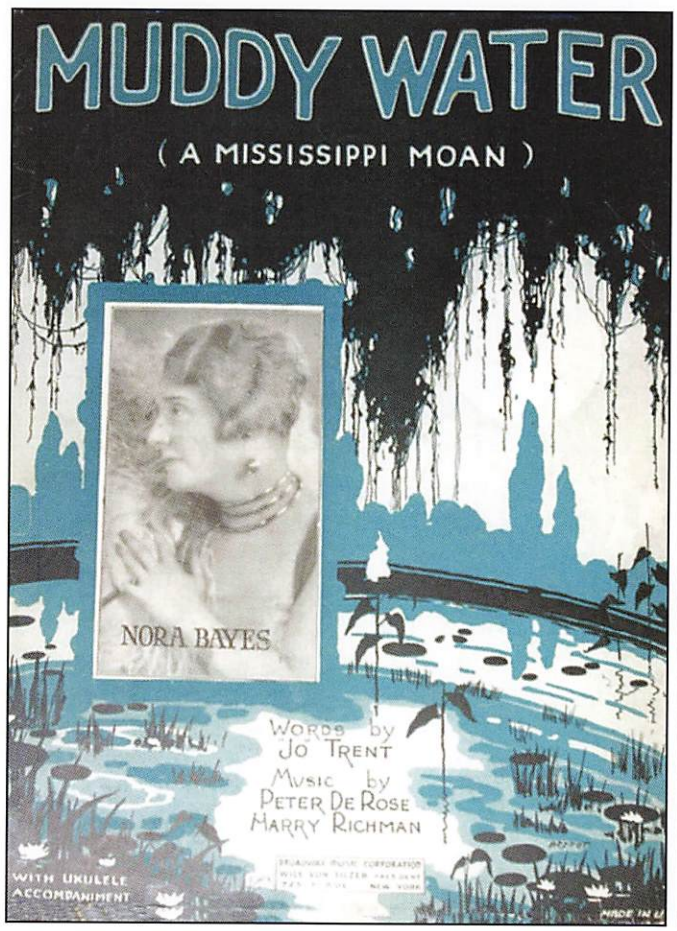
**Peter de Ryk, writing in the Australian Bing Crosby Society's newsletter, looks back at Bing's first solo recording.**

2017 is certainly a year for anniversaries. It's also the 40th anniversary of Bing's final album, *Seasons,* the 70th anniversary of his last number one hit *Now Is the Hour,* the 75th anniversary of *White Christmas* being recorded, and the 80th anniversary of his first collaboration with John Scott Trotter. Perhaps more scarily, it was 90 years ago that Bing (not yet 24) recorded his first vocal solo - *Muddy Water* (subtitled *A Mississippi Moan).* This number, cut on the 7th of March 1927, was with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, and the first track of Bing's not to include either Al Rinker or Harry Barris. It was recorded in three takes, with only the third of these being issued.

The song was written by Peter De Rose, Jo Trent and Harry Richman, and the arrangement on this occasion was prepared by violinist Matty Malneck. Malneck, as well as being ever-present on the Whiteman recordings, was to make significant contributions to Bing's career through to the late '30s, writing his 1931 hit *I'm Through with Love,* and leading the backing groups on the sessions that produced *My Kinda Love/Till We Meet* (14/3/1929 – Bing's first record as soloist under his own name), *I Kiss Your Hand Madame/Baby, Oh Where Can You Be? (24/5/1929), Can't We Be Friends/Gay Love* (27/9/1929), *Summertime/A Blues Serenade* (8/7/1938) and *Deep Purple/Stardust* (22/3/1939).

Interestingly, *Muddy Water* was an early example of inter-racial songwriting in the USA. Peter De Rose was a white songwriter with just a handful of published songs to his credit at the time (he was later to write some major hits such as *Deep Purple, Have You Ever Been*

*Lonely, On a Little Street in Singapore, Starlit Hour, The Lamp is Low, Autumn Serenade, Marshmallow World* and *Buona Sera.)* De Rose's collaborator on this occasion was black lyricist Jo (Joseph H.) Trent, whose credits at that time were more impressive than De Rose's, having written songs with Clarence Williams, Walter Donaldson, Duke Ellington and Fats Waller. The De Rose/Trent partnership began with *Muddy Water,* which was a hit, and led to a five-year association. Jo Trent later wrote the lyrics for another hit associated with Bing's early career: *My Kinda Love.* He went on to write *Gotta Feelin' for You* (sung by Joan Crawford in MGM's *Hollywood Revue of 1929*), a stage musical with James P. Johnson entitled *Sugar Hill,* and several songs with Hoagy Carmichael. Popular entertainer Harry Richman (who 3 years later introduced Irving Berlin's *Puttin' On the Ritz)* apparently contributed something to the melody of *Muddy Water,* although it is debateable just how much. In his autobiography, he claimed it as his song alone, with no mention of the other two writers. The veteran vaudevillian Nora Bayes' picture appeared on the sheet music, as she would have been offered the song by De Rose who had, at one time, been her accompanist.




Richman himself was the first to-record *Muddy Water* on the 27th of January 1927, and he claimed that his version sold over 300,000 copies. Other contemporary versions were recorded by Bessie Smith, Vaughn De Leath, Gene Austin, Ben Bernie and his Orchestra and, across the Atlantic, Jack Hylton's Hyltonians and the Piccadilly Revels Band. Of these different interpretations, the best are generally considered to be Bessie Smith's, and Whiteman/Crosby's. The song is a typical romanticisation of the South ("They live in ease and comfort down there, I declare!") and centres around the Mississippi River as do many of the great songs in this genre (1927 is also the year that *Ol' Man River* first appeared). Some believed that it constituted an exploitation of the Great Flood of 1927, one of the worst natural disasters in US history. This opinion is partly based on some of the lyrics ("Muddy water 'round my feet, Muddy water in the street ... "). However, that is a little unfair as the first levee to break along the Mississippi was on the 16th of April, nearly 3 months after the song's initial release, and over 4 months after it was first copyrighted on December 1st, 1926, predating even the Cumberland River floods in Nashville on Christmas Day 1926. While there had been heavy rains since the summer of 1926, there was no reason to believe at that stage that conditions were likely to be any worse than usual in the flood-prone South. One song that *did* refer directly to the 1927 floods was Bessie Smith's *Back Water Blues.*

Listening to Bing's performance of his first solo is still astonishing, especially when placed alongside other vocalists of the day. His unforced, jazz-influenced phrasing floats easily on top of the strict dance-tempo backing, and his powerful baritone is pure youthful exuberance. Paul Whiteman had previously shown little interest in the vocal portions of his records, but after hiring Bing and Al Rinker late in 1926, he began hearing some sounds that pleased him. The first solo spot he offered Bing was actually on *I'm Coming Virginia,* which was also the first number attempted in the studio by The Rhythm Boys just after Harry Barris was recruited to the group. Bing sang the verse and first chorus solo, and the trio performed a scat chorus later. After 4 rejected takes of that song on the 3rd of March 1927, it was abandoned until late the following month. *Muddy Water* followed 4 days after that first Rhythm Boys session.

Yes, that was 90 years ago!

**Peter de Ryk**

## In the Crosby Groove with Dan Levinson

**Martin McQuade returns to our pages again, this time telling of a meeting with Dan Levinson, the jazz clarinetist, saxophonist, and bandleader**

One of my life's splendid pleasures is making the acquaintance of someone who shares my passion for the pop music of long ago, and specifically, the legacy of Bing Crosby. A case in point is Dan Levinson, a

renowned practitioner of traditional jazz and swing music. His mastery of the clarinet has brought him considerable acclaim, both on numerous recordings, in concert and on screen. Dan's playing on the soundtrack of Martin Scorsese's *The Aviator* enhances the film's nostalgic aura, and the soundtrack of the TV series *Boardwalk Empire* boasts his talents. His prolific discography is available at his website. Dan's tributes to Benny Goodman, especially his re-creations of his idol's 1938 Carnegie Hall concert, have enthralled international audiences. Dan is the clarinetist - and co-founder of - James Langton's New York All-Star Big Band, considered the city's preeminent swing orchestra. Since 1993, Dan has been a member of Vince Giordano's Nighthawks. In addition, he has formed an array of ensembles, featuring ragtime-era dance music, early jazz and swing. Their names conjure a connoisseur's fantasy: The Canary Cottage Dance Orchestra, The Roof Garden Jass Band, The Palomar Quartet, Fete Manouche (in homage to Django Reinhardt) and The New Millennium All-Stars.

Then there is Dan Levinson's Gotham SophistiCats, which provided a midsummer night's bill of fare entitled "Swinging on a Star...Under the Stars! Hot Jazz from the Golden Age of Hollywood." on July 15 at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, as part of the college's outdoor concert series called *Hot Summer Nights.* Here is how the brochure described the evening. "Hooray for Hollywood! Enjoy a starlit evening of silver screen melodies that Fred and Ginger- and Bing - romanced to. Pick yourself up, shake the blues away, put on the Ritz, and step out with your baby - you'll be carrying moonbeams home in a jar." *These cozy virtuosi*, joined by Dan's wife Molly Ryan (supplying vocals, as well as a stage presence, reminiscent of Dixie Lee) scattered Crosby standards among the chestnuts, and the audience responded enthusiastically. The intermission afforded me an opportunity to chat briefly with Dan for the first time in several years, and he graciously agreed to articulate his zeal for Bing in a subsequent telephone conversation, expressly for *BING* magazine.

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What was your first exposure to Bing?

**Dan: I was born in 1965. When I was growing up Bing was all around. My mother used to watch his Christmas shows. I was not yet into the old music. So I remember him vaguely as some old dude who was on television with a low voice. I really didn't have an interest in him. It wasn't until I was 16 years old that I started to explore different types of music on my own. Somewhere around the age of 17 or 18, I started to get into the music of the 1920's and 1930's, and I heard records that Crosby had made when he was much younger from this era. Specifically, I first heard the early Bing on that Paul Whiteman record which Columbia put out with the potato head cover on it. I started to appreciate Bing. The image in my mind of Bing was the old guy on the Christmas shows. Now I was experiencing him when he was young. I remember seeing *The King of Jazz* on television when it was restored back in the early 1980's. Here I saw a much different Bing Crosby, at the very beginning of his career. I saw the charm he exuded, the way he bounced and swayed back and forth when he sang with the beat. He was very captivating, and I began developing an interest in his music. The Columbia double LP, *The Bing Crosby Story, Vol. 1* increased my love for his recordings from the early 30's.**

**The album that really changed my life was *Bing Crosby in Hollywood.* I absolutely fell in love with the sound of his voice, particularly on the heart wrenching ballads like "After Sundown," "The Day You Came Along" and "We'll Make Hay While the Sun Shines." I liked every one of them and I was determined to hear more. I acquired the 3 LPs that Michael Brooks put out in the late 70's on Columbia. I gradually began enlarging my record collection and made it my objective to acquire every recording Bing made, from The Rhythm Boys period up unto well into the Decca period. I bought 78's, LPs and had friends make tapes for me. By my early 20's I was able to get everything in one form or another. Still, the Brunswick period was the golden period for me. There were some nice recordings on Decca, but they didn't have the raw, endearing quality that the Brunswick stuff had. I'm not a big fan of swing music in general. I like certain bands. I tend to zero in on music from 1933 and 1934. I like the accompaniments on the Brunswick records. Yet Decca had some great stuff; for instance, "Sailor Beware" and "Love Is Just Around the Corner." Nevertheless, I rapidly realized that the Brunswick era was my favorite.**

SAILOR BEWARE
WORDS BY LEO ROBIN • MUSIC BY RICHARD A. WHITING
YOU'RE THE TOP
ANYTHING GOES • I GET A KICK OUT OF YOU • THERE'LL ALWAYS BE A LADY FAIR • MOON BURN • SAILOR BEWARE
MY HEART AND I • SHANGHAI-DEE-HO
from the Paramount Picture
"ANYTHING GOES"
starring
BING CROSBY • ETHEL MERMAN
CHARLIE RUGGLES

That is such an interesting transition period. During the first 2 or 3 years at Decca, there is still the sound from the pre-Decca years. Perhaps Bing modified his sound because he realized by the mid-30's that he had such a long career ahead of him that he had to sort of rein in his powers and not blow his gasket, so to speak. He developed that extremely smooth sound that became the template for so many stars to follow. I also feel the change might have been a consequence of the Eddie Lang's sudden death from tonsillectomy complications, which was such a traumatic experience and such a pivotal life-changing moment for him. Kathryn Crosby once told me that Bing never really got over this loss. Who could say where Bing's recording and radio career would have gone if Lang had not died so tragically young? Perhaps Bing would have remained more jazz-oriented. Perhaps he would not even have joined Jack Kapp at Decca if Lang had not died.

**Dan: The first Bing Crosby record I ever owned was Decca's 2 LP set, *The Best of Bing*. That was before I'd heard his early recordings. When I heard "Pennies from Heaven," I said, "Is that the same guy?" It's such a radically different style of singing." That was the last echo of Bing from the early 30's. About 30 years ago, Somebody told me that Bing had a tonsillectomy, and that's what changed his singing style. I've been unable to find any evidence of that. Maybe he changed his style not only to preserve his voice, but also because styles were changing. People didn't want that operatic sound that was popular in the early 30's. The style became more casual and relaxed.**

I believe that in early 1933 a throat specialist discovered a node on Bing's larynx, which, in fact, he determined would improve his timbre.

**Dan: And yet Crosby seems very hoarse on many of those early Brunswick records.**

Yes. I do notice the hoarseness. In addition, Bing has a throaty rasp on several Brunswicks, right around the time of that procedure.

**Dan: Whatever the hoarseness was, it went away by the mid-30's.**

In addition, Bing abandoned his scat singing around the same time he left Brunswick. I have a feeling that Kapp may have thought that the scat singing was somewhat raw and perhaps asked Bing to lessen it, or perhaps to completely stop it. Bing kind of sublimated it into his whistling and became an extraordinary jazz whistler throughout his career. Essentially, Bing's voice retained its thrall upon me all the way to the end because the sound of it is unusual. There's a certain array of colors displayed unlike any other singer's sound. There's also purity and an honesty. Essentially, I agree with you that the youthful, virile dynamism of the late 20's and early 30's is so magnetic and mesmerizing. It truly holds you in a spell.

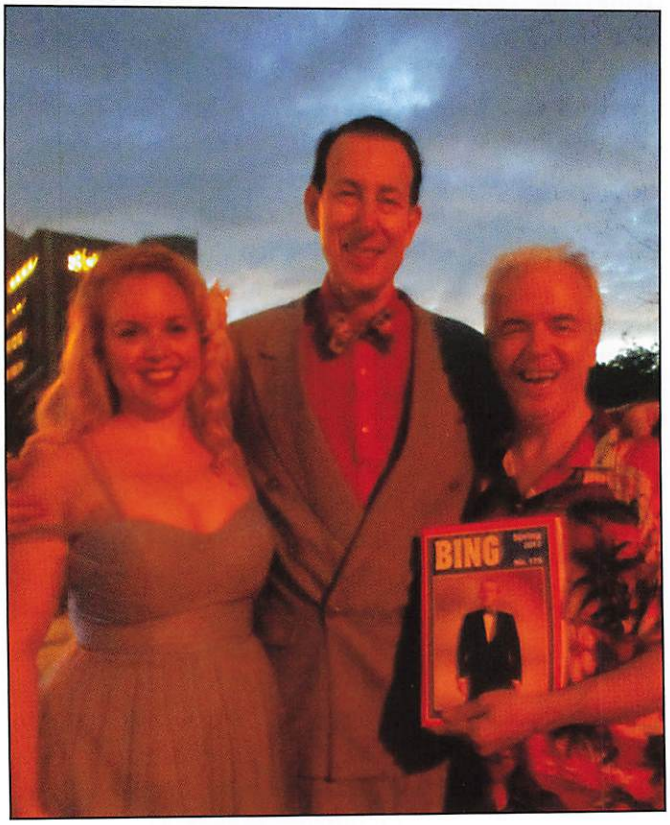
**Dan: He had that quality for me up to 1936-1937. I don't think the material he was singing at Decca was as interesting. Maybe it was suited to his voice. I don't think the later songs were as good as those written by Robin and Rainger or Gordon and Revel or Coslow and Johnston. They had real magic. It wasn't just the sound of the voice. It's a combination of the voice, a certain type of song and a certain type of accompaniment that really worked. I recall Michael Brooks' liner notes where he said that 1932-1934 was a real golden era for Bing. That goes for every tune. Then there was the unstrained persona, which was a completely different aspect, which doesn't come through on the records. There was a real magnetism. I wanted to be a singer like that. I wanted to have that magnetic quality. I just fell in love with his sound.**

By 1934, when Bing was already in the top ten box office, he realized that he had such a workload, such a career unfurling in front of him, that maybe someone advised him to marshal his powers somewhat. I don't think he ever sang again with that gasket-popping approach he was doing on, say, "Temptation" or "Home on the Range" or "The Last Roundup." I mean the sound is just magnificent and seamless and sounds effortless. He hits notes there that he would never approach again towards the mid-30's and on. These notes don't recur in the subsequent Decca years. You sent me your recording of "South Sea Island Magic," which has a lovely arrangement with Molly's vocal. Bing took yet another approach to singing in the Hawaiian recordings. They bring out a different kind of Bing.

**Dan: "Blue Hawaii" still has the charm of the Brunswick era. It has a schmaltzy quality with Bing reaching up to those notes. It was sort of a step back when he did those things. I looked for those when I started to get into the Decca stuff in the early 80's. Then I got back into the Brunswick era because as I got further into the Decca period the records I liked were fewer and far between. So I listened to everything up to 1937. Beyond that, there are things that I really like that have a nice swing to them from the late 30's into the 40's. I enjoy very much the *Bing with a Beat* album with Bob Scobey. I like that kind of music. The album that came out on Decca, *Bing and the Dixieland Bands*, inspired me.**

The arrangement you made of "I'm an Old Cowhand" that you played at the concert pretty well parallels Bing's recording.

**Dan: That was the original arrangement. I wrote it out myself by listening to the recording. I adapted it to Molly's key. Although the arrangement was the original, it was my transcription. I added lyrics, naming the individual members of the band. I've also adapted Bing's recording of "You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby" with Bob Crosby's band. They both have a nice swing to them. I can't really imagine doing those Brunswick recordings with the band you saw at Kingsborough. It wouldn't work. They have to be jazz oriented numbers. And you have to have somebody who can really sing those things. There's the way Crosby does "Love Is Just Around the Corner." I did write it out for Molly and she sang it. The funny thing is it's not the melody that makes that record swing as well as it did. When I wrote it out for her, I analyzed and wrote out every note that Bing sang. What a genius he was in terms of the way he interpreted a song and made it more than the melody. He has a groove. He doesn't sing the melody.**




**Martin holds his BING magazine as he meets Dan Levinson and Molly Ryan.**

Yes. It's such a subtle phrasing. Every single note is different from what the melody would have sounded like if he just sang it straight. Almost every phrase has a unique Crosby device that makes it totally his.

**Dan: It's very different from what he does on the sugary ballads from the Brunswick era. It hearkens back to "Some of These Days," or the things he did with The Mills Brothers like "Shine." He has a nice swing and he kept it throughout his career, for instance, when he sang with the Bob Scobey band in the 50's or the broadcast recordings with Buddy Cole that Mosaic recently issued. He really knew how to take a jazz tune and add his own swing to it.**

Those recordings show Bing returning to his roots. It's just him with Buddy Cole and a few sidemen. They were very streamlined and quite a departure from the big orchestra shows with John Scott Trotter. They were an attempt by Bing to pare it down and simplify things somewhat.

**There's also a unique kind of a swing in the way he *doesn't* swing. It's kind of an even eighth-note feel, like on "When the Bluebirds and the Blackbirds Got Together." Bix Beiderbecke played that way. It's very even and swinging. To use "Love Is Just Around the Corner" as an example again: while the band is swinging behind him, his even eighth-note vocal rides over the top. It has a kick to it!**

You're reinforcing the fact that Bing was by far from all the other singers of the time. He was putting forth something that was very fresh and new.

**Dan: Just think about the way he scat-sings on those early recordings. I'm sure he picked up some of his phrasing from Bix.**

There's such ferocious momentum to it. I've hardly ever heard that in any other scat singers. When you watch him scat sing to "Dinah" in *The Big Broadcast* with Eddie Lang behind him, There's so much going on in that face, so much energy. That, along with the sequence in *The King of Jazz*, is the only opportunity we have to watch Bing scat in those early years. He's so calm and relaxed as he's scatting.

**Dan: I can see the groove in his body as he bounces, not up and down so much as side to side.**

Peggy Lee once said that she always felt comfortable watching Bing keep beat with his feet. Whenever she would be singing on his show, whether a duet or a solo, she would ask him to stand near her so she could watch his impeccable metronomic beat with his feat. He was a real ball of rhythm. Speaking of rhythm, your arrangement of "Swinging on a Star" was interesting. You elongated the number. You took those instrumentals and Molly sang the chorus then you did very infectious instrumentals in between her vocals. It was an electrifying rendition of the song.

**Dan: Thank you. I adapted it for my band because I wrote it for a *jazz* concert. We couldn't do a whole concert of just vocals with no opportunities for the musicians to "blow", so I added an instrumental**

**ensemble chorus and an improvised horn solo in between each vocal chorus.**

The performance made me realize what a jazzy melody the song has. The theme and motif lends itself to riffs and improvisation. I never really heard that swinging a performance of that song before.

**Dan: So does "I'm an Old Cowhand." That's a swinging arrangement. The band lets loose on the original record.**

Like Bing, Molly did a nice modulation, a changing of the tempo towards the end. You really captured the fun of that recording.

**Dan: The concept was to imitate the Crosby record. It goes into half time and back to double time like Bing did on his record. When I sent the music to the guys, I sent them a midi version of the original so they'd know what the arrangement should sound like. There's a shortcoming to midi because it doesn't sound like real instruments. It does give you an idea of what it's supposed to sound like. In addition to the midi version, I sent them Bing's record so they could hear what I wanted it to sound like.**

I understand that you studied with the legendary clarinetist, Rosy McHargue.

**"Dan: He was my mentor, who got me started. He was also a Bing fan. Bing was his favorite singer. Rosy used to see Bix and Bing perform with Paul Whiteman's band. He once told me that he went with his wife to see *Reaching for the Moon* when it first came out in 1930. When Bing came out to sing "When the Folks High Up Do That Mean Lowdown," he turned to his wife and said, "Isn't that the singer in Whiteman's band?" Another one of my teachers was clarinetist and saxophone player Al Gallodoro, who joined the Whiteman band in 1936.**

I know that you are a great Benny Goodman fan. Perhaps you can answer which Crosby session might feature Goodman's playing.

**Dan: Let me consult Russ Connor's Goodman discography, which I have right here. According to Connor, "Benny says he cannot remember ever having recorded with Bing, and that a date in the studios with Bing isn't something he'd likely forget. They knew each other well in those days, and they admired each other's work. Benny recalls Bing playing 'parlor golf' in the apartment Benny occupied in New York - putting balls into highball glasses. Bing (later) invited Benny to appear on his radio show, but it didn't come about. Benny 'regrets not having worked with Bing'. Bing termed Benny's Victor-era band 'immortal.' That they could have and should have pooled their talents is obvious; but for one reason or another, says Benny, it never happened. The author believes it did happen, on a session commonly listed as a Crosby-Dorsey Brothers date. The tone, the style, and the lilt of the clarinet on that January 26, 1933 session seem unquestionably Benny's. Most Benny Goodman and Dorsey collectors now agree. Benny, upon listening to the records [they would've been "I've Got the World on a String" and "My Honey's Lovin' Arms"] just pressed his lips together and refused to commit himself."**

What are your feelings about Bob Crosby's band?

**Dan: That band preserved the older styles of jazz. Matty Matlock, Bob Haggart, Eddie Miller and Ray Bauduc were my heroes. I saw the band in Disneyland sometime in the late 80's. I sat right next to the bandstand where Bob Haggart was standing. I did record with Haggart. That was a real honor for me. He knew Rosy McHargue very well. In the 80's Rosy wanted to see Bob Haggart's band at a jazz festival. I brought Rosy right up to the bandstand. We sat there and listened to the whole set. At the end of the set, Rosy said to me, "When does Bob Haggart come on?" I said, "What are you talking about? Bob Haggart's right there!" Rosy said, "That's Bob Haggart?" I asked, "Rosy, when was the last time you saw Bob Haggart?' He said, "I don't know. 1938?" Afterwards, they had a nice chat.**

I know that you have accompanied a variety of notable singers. Mel Torme comes to mind, as does Leon Redbone, whom I understand is a big Bing fan, especially the early years, and recorded many of Bing's songs.

**Dan: I toured with Redbone for 12 years. We used to listen to early Crosby while we were on the road. His taste in music was more eclectic than that of anyone I've ever known - it included Emmett Miller, Blind Blake, Paganini, Caruso, Gene Austin, John McCormack, Moran and Mack, Cliff Edwards, Jelly Roll Morton, Ted Lewis, Mustafà the Castrato, the Hungarian singer Imre Laszlo, Jimmie Rodgers ("The Singing Brakeman"), Mongolian throat singers, W.C. Fields, Laurel and Hardy...and early Bing Crosby."**

So many Bing fans are partial to his early classic recordings.

**Dan: I never get tired of them. If Bing never recorded anything besides those 1932-1935 records, he would**

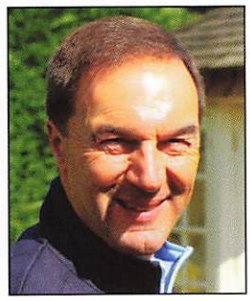
**still be the greatest vocalist of all time. I could listen to them forever!**

On that note, an illuminating discussion reluctantly ended between two devotees whose lives Bing Crosby irrevocably transformed. Thank you Dan for keeping the flame so brilliantly aglow.

**Martin McQuade**

# CROSBYANA

**Ken Crossland has been listening to the recent BBC programme about Bing.**



Funny things, legacies. How often have you heard an interviewer ask some eminent individual "How would you like to be remembered?", and the answer is often not what you expect. It happened with Bing, of course, frequently. "An average guy who could carry a tune" was perhaps his most quoted answer, but a more detailed answer came in one of his final television interviews, that with the *grande dame* of American TV, Barbara Walters in the early summer of 1977. Bing conceded that he had been "a fair singer, mostly in tune", had a "good vocabulary", read lines well and had a good sense of comedy timing, but that was it. Walters was incredulous. "Is that all there is?" she asked, to which Bing shrugged, seemingly mystified that anyone might think that there should be more.

When the British journalist, Alistair Cooke, presented his memories of Bing in his *Letter from America*, three months after Bing's passing, he offered the comment that of all the celebrities he had come across in so many walks of life, the one with the least sense of ego about him was Bing. It is of course a laudable characteristic - how many people do you know who have a strong ego about them, and who you actually like? Few, I suspect. But laudable though it may be, it does little to promote remembrance after the average guy is gone. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why, in the 40 years since he left us, Bing seems to be remembered for the wrong things.

One of the perils of being the singer on the most famous gramophone record of all time is that it is always likely to dwarf everything else. In Bing's case, "White Christmas" has obliterated everything else. Few people now aged under 50 can name another Bing Crosby hit and the people who were there when Bing sat as a colossus on the world of entertainment and popular music get fewer with every passing year. Tony Bennett described Bing in the early 30s as being like "Elvis Presley, The Beatles and Michael Jackson" all added together, but the memory is fading.

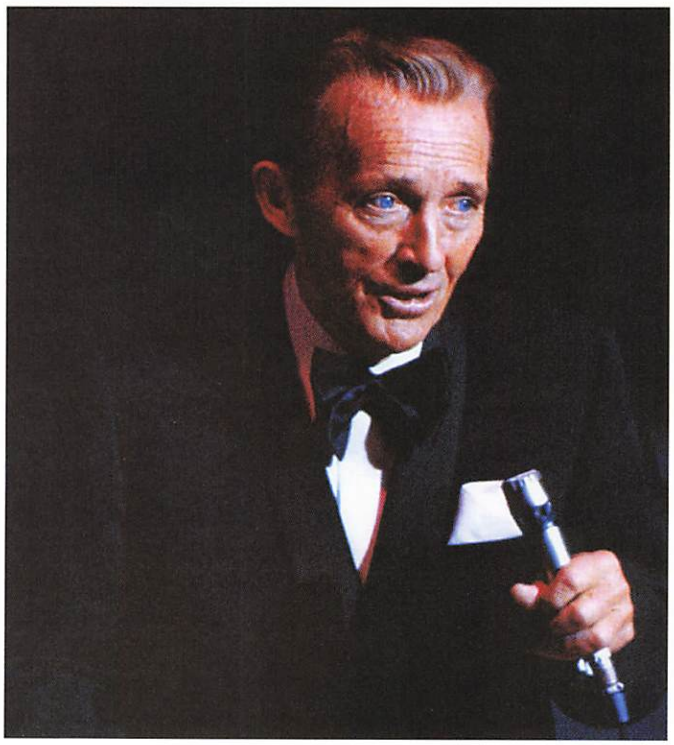
What we end up with is a mismatch of memory and status. That the name Bing Crosby is still known around the world, 40 years after he died, is in itself remarkable, but the world seems to struggle at times to find reasons for the enduring celebrity of the man. A growing theme in recent years has been the association and involvement of Bing with the adoption and growth of tape recording in the western world immediately following the end of World War 2, a legacy that at times, seems to position Bing as a technological guru, years ahead of his time. The reality was that Bing, in mid-career, was tired of the restrictions imposed by a live radio broadcast schedule every week and was willing to chance his arm with anything that would give him more time to get out on the golf course. If putting money into a venture that the GIs had brought back from the conquered Nazi Germany was a way of achieving that, well, let's go for it.

It was therefore with some trepidation that I approached the BBC's 40th anniversary tribute, *Bing Crosby in the Road to Rock and Roll*, expecting to hear an overstated account of Bing and the tape revolution, and not enough about Bing the singer. How wrong I was. Not only was the mere existence of the programme a triumph for those in this club and elsewhere who work tirelessly to keep Bing's name alive, the programme itself was arguably the best and most interesting feature on Bing since the dark days of 1977.

What made is so good? Three things for me. The first is that it was conceived from the standpoint of the music business. The credit for that goes to Steve Levine, not a name ever previously associated with Bing, or indeed Bing's era, but a man who began his career at the then new CBS recording studios in London that Ken Barnes used for much of his work with Bing, including the final *Seasons* album. What Levine and his co-producer and writer, Lewis Borg-Cardona, did was to paint a picture of Bing in his final weeks as he was - an active performer, still breaking new ground, still moving forward. Two particular contributions helped achieve this, one from Steve Taylor, who engineered *Seasons* and other Ken Barnes projects, and the other from Gordon Rose, now 91, a contemporary of Tony Bennett and someone therefore who shared the same perspective of Bing's standing as the singer supreme.

Rose was the musical director for Bing's 1977

season at the London Palladium - because he was the MD for the Palladium itself, something I never knew. Rose's take on Bing the man was fascinating - initially wary when they first met, then once Bing's shyness was overcome, a warm and engaging man, "with no side", and someone who was keen to chat and share stories of a life in music, plus the odd raunchy tale about Bob Hope.



**Bing sings at the Palladium in 1977.**

The second thing was the presenter, Elizabeth McGovern, an Academy Award nominated actress best known recently for her part in Downton Abbey and again, not someone you would associate with Bing, yet she brought a professionalism to her task alongside just enough personal memory and affection for her subject to make it so listenable.

Last but not least was the quality of the research. I suspect I was not alone in finding things I didn't know, and being pleased so to do. Some were just interesting points of detail - Gordon Rose's explanation that whilst it would have been nice if the last song Bing had sung at Maida Vale, three days before he died, had been "Once In a While", as is commonly reported, it wasn't. Bing's last song, we now know, was "Summer Wind". But the real quality of the programme was in the account of Bing's role in the tape revolution. There was no attempt to paint Bing as a visionary, just a refreshing honesty about Bing's real motivation, and the programme's rock'n roll linked-title was soon revealed to be not much more than a piece of tongue-in-cheek bunkum - but again, properly explained via Bing's friendship with Les Paul, the early gift to him of a tape recorder and the path that did indeed flow from there to rock and heavy metal.

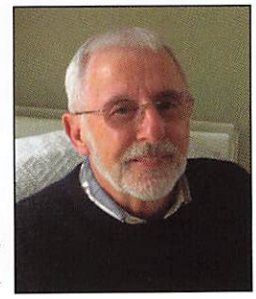
Best of all though was the explanation not just of how tape recorders travelled from Germany to the USA, but why the Nazi regime and Hitler himself had placed so much investment into the technology as a vehicle for propagating the regime's propaganda, plus a technical breakthrough in 1940 that improved the recording quality to a level that was unsurpassed until the advent of digital recording thirty years later. Fast forward thirty-plus years and we had a first-hand account of Bing's final sessions, with Steve Taylor explaining the unusual microphone he had used to accommodate Bing's wish to sit in with the band. The product, 12 stunning vocals by a septuagenarian singer, was captured onto the same magnetic tape that had started life in a different world. Bravo, Der Bingle, but yes, bravo Steve Levine too.

**Ken Crossland** ken54@blueyonder.co.uk

*(Editor: Many thanks, Ken. Other feedback I've had about the programme was that there was a little too much technical data about tape recording and not enough of Bing singing. Elizabeth McGovern is a self-confessed Crosby fan and she did a good job albeit her pronunciation of "Ampex" was a little strange, sounding more like "Ampax". The programme was pretty accurate although it was March 1977 when Bing fell off the stage not June. The highlight for me however was the contribution by Gordon Rose especially his contention that "Bing was special" and that he was the "greatest entertainer of the twentieth century". If you missed it, it may still be available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b096ymgw. Pick of The Week on Radio 4 on October 15 included a clip from the Gordon Rose interview.)*

# BING ON THE BOX

**Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.**



## TV highlights - USA & Canada

Bing's films and other items seen on TV since our last issue was prepared were:

| | |
|---|---|
| High Society | TCM |
| High Time | FXM |
| Road to Morocco | TCM |
| Stagecoach | STZEN |

Also, Martin McQuade alerted me to a broadcast on September 4 at 4 AM eastern time on C-SPAN 3 as part of a program, "American History TV in Spokane, Washington."

By way of background, C-SPAN's Local Content Vehicles (LCVs) made a stop in their "2017 LCV Cities Tour" in Spokane, Washington, from July 1-7 to feature the history and literary life of the community. Working with the Comcast cable local affiliate, they visited literary and historic sites where local historians, authors, and civic leaders were interviewed. In the program ICC member Bill Stimson, a volunteer helper at the Bing Crosby House, spoke fluently for 15 minutes from Bing's former home about the groaner's early life and career. It's well worth watching and it may still be available, see: *https://www.c-span.org/video/?432361-1/bing-crosby-american-culture*

## USA & Canadian Radio

### Crosby Internet Radio

Crosby Internet Radio continues to broadcast 24/7. They are repeating the shows broadcast last year and they make very good listening indeed. The shows change on a monthly basis with the 15-minute 1954-56 show typically running throughout the day with other programs such as the Philco, Chesterfield and GE shows being interleaved every hour or so. The Crosby-Clooney shows are used frequently too. A new and most welcome addition starting in October were many of Arne Fogel's excellent "Bing Shift" programs. I expect that the broadcast will have reverted to Bing's Christmas songs by the time you are reading this.

### Other USA shows

On October 12, Wig Wiggins had telephoned his very good friend (and fellow ICC member) Rob Bamberger, host of the long running (27 years) three hour "Hot Jazz Saturday Night" radio program on WAMU 88.5-FM (and NPR Worldwide) to ask it he would play a few tracks by Bing on the 14th. He readily agreed and Wig and he selected a half dozen appropriate recordings for that purpose. Let Wig continue the story.

"On Saturday night, I was amazed to discover that Rob would instead devote his entire three hours to a carefully researched and extremely well presented review of the development of Bing's musical legacy as evidenced by his recordings and a few radio broadcast songs. In a further conversation on Monday, I learned that Rob had spent his entire Friday (up to 3:00 am) and Saturday morning putting together his show, an incredible sense of dedication to Bing's memory.

During his program, Rob played a total of 40 complete tracks by Bing, beginning with "I've Got the Girl" and ending with his Chesterfield duet with Louis Armstrong (fluffs and all) on "A Kiss to Build a Dream On". He also included "I'm Through with Love" from Bing's first CBS broadcast.

Rob began with a description of Bing's last concert tour to the UK and his death on the golf course in Spain, followed by quotes from Gary Giddins on Bing's legacy as the one who re-invented the singing of the American popular song, while never leaving his unique jazz roots.

The first hour which followed featured recordings with Paul Whiteman, Gus Arnheim and Bing's Brunswick years, and traced the development of his ballad style, including "I Surrender, Dear" and "Where the Blue of the Night" (1931 version) and "I've Got the World on a String".

The second hour focused on the importance of Bing's jazz and scat styles, with recordings with the Rhythm Boys and the Mills Brothers, as well as outstanding solos such as "Sweet Georgia Brown".

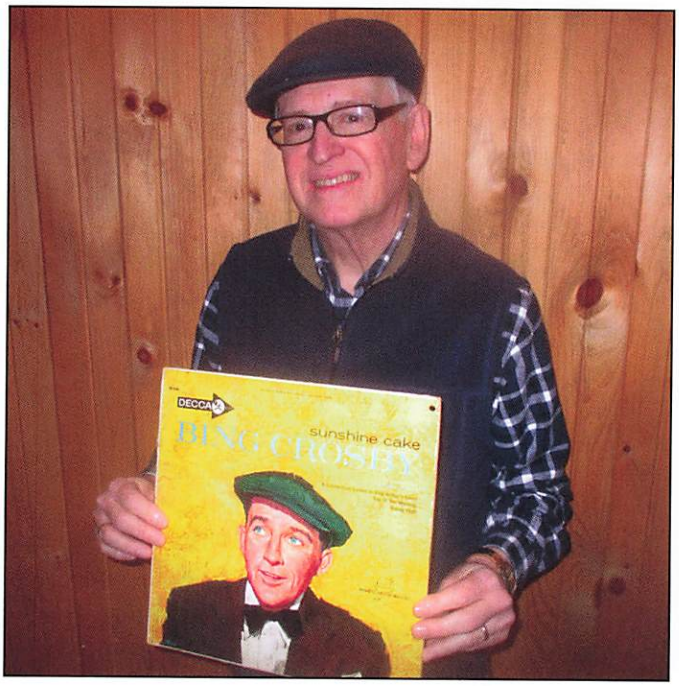
Rob's third hour moved on to Bing's recordings of his film songs for Brunswick and Decca, plus examples of his widening repertoire (under Jack Kapp) with examples in the Western and Hawaiian style. Also included were duets with Connee Boswell, before closing with the 1932 version of "Please" featuring Eddie Lang.

Rob provided a completely unexpected and unique tribute to Bing (whom he personally greatly admires) taken largely from his collection of Jonzo and Sepia CDs. The program was broadcast throughout the Baltimore / Washington / Richmond listening area (and worldwide) and featured a large number of recordings that I doubt have seldom, if ever, been played on radio in the 40 years since Bing's passing."

**Arne Fogel's** weekly radio program "The Bing Shift" is on Sundays at 8 p.m. (CST) on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis & St. Paul, Minnesota. It can now be accessed on demand at

http://www.jazz88.fm/on-demand/ and it's always enjoyable with an eclectic selection. On October 15, Arne had a special show commemorating the 40th anniversary and he started appropriately with "There's Nothing I Haven't Sung About" and moved on to "Summer Wind" before playing the entire Crosby medley from the 1976 Palladium show. He finished up with songs from "Seasons" and "The Final Chapter" to make it a memorable session.

**Jack Boyle's** BING *for the SEASONS* show from Hudson Valley in New York State has had a different theme each month. In July, the theme was "Patriot's Songbook" using songs such as "Song of Freedom", "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition" and "This Is a Great Country".




**Jack Boyle gets ready for his show**

August had "Songs with Her Name on It: Dolly to Dinah" and Jack played "Hello Dolly!", "Margie", "Roxie" and "I Loye You Samantha" amongst many others. *Songs for a Sweet September* was the title for the following month and Jack used "September Song", "Indian Summer" (with Rosie), "Autumn Leaves" and "September in the Rain" amongst others. For October, Jack selected Bing singing "That Old Black Magic", "Temptation", "One Song" and nine others.

The program airs twice monthly, the first Sunday of the month at 7 pm, with an Encore Presentation on the third Sunday of the month at 9 am ET on Hudson Valley Public Radio's JAZZ FM (and on the Internet at HVPR.ORG).

**Greg Van Beek's** weekly radio series Nostalgia Radio Time on 1420 AM WJUB has continued its long run on Saturday nights starting at 9 pm (CST) / 10 pm (ET). Greg always has a "Bing Sings" segment in the hour-long program. On October 14 he remembered Bing on the 40th anniversary of his passing by examining the final ten months of his life in detail. Songs played were: Straight Down the Middle - Dinah (with the Mills Brothers) - Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive (with Bette Midler) - She's a Lady (with Paul Anka) - Don't Get Around Much Anymore - Dear Hearts and Gentle People - Little Drummer Boy (with David Bowie) - White Christmas - Seasons - June in January - Yesterday When I Was Young - I'll Follow My Secret Heart - Mad Dogs and Englishmen - Now You Has Jazz - Sail Away from Norway - All Alone - As Time Goes By - Once in a While. It was an excellent program with many rare items being played.

You can catch Greg online at the www.1420thebreeze.com site or you can listen to the previous two weeks shows on Greg's podcast on Podomatic.com.

The **Star Spangled Radio Hour** can still be heard at http://www.cruisin1430.com/media/podcast/star-spangled-radio-hour and Bing pops up now and then. On July 22, we had a Crosby bonanza with three programs: Command Performance #75 from July 11, 1943; GI Journal #53 from July 21, 1944; and the Kraft Music Hall from July 6, 1944.

## TV highlights - UK

Crosby items seen since our last issue was prepared were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Andy Williams: My Favourite Duets | Sky Arts |
| The Country Girl | SkyDramaRom |
| The Legendary Bing Crosby | Sky Arts |

Also, several Bing films are available "On Demand" from Sky-TV.

The BBC2 show "Antiques Road Trip" on October 2 used the Rhythm Boys "Three Little Words" briefly in an item about the history of printing in Norwich.

## UK radio

The BBC mounted a special tribute to Bing on Radio2 on October 11 with the hour-long **Bing Crosby in the Road to Rock 'n' Roll** which commemorated the 40th anniversary of Bing's untimely passing. At the same time the show also celebrated a critical moment in the history of radio: the 70th anniversary of the very first programme recorded on magnetic tape - Bing's *Philco Radio Time.* Bing spent the last month of his life entirely in England - save for his fateful golfing trip to Spain. The show was an in-depth look at this time: including the recording of Bing's last Christmas Special and his final commercial album, Seasons; a UK regional tour; a two week London Palladium residency; plus his radio swansong - a BBC session at Maida Vale. Please see Ken Crossland's *Crosbyana* article earlier in this issue for more details.

### The National Presenters

**Clare Teal** had a tribute to Bing on October 15 to mark the 40th anniversary and she played five songs during her programme: - "Swinging on a Star" – "It

Happened in Monterey" (with Rosemary Clooney) – "Puttin' on the Ritz" – "Jeepers Creepers" and "Dream a Little Dream of Me". Clare had also included Bing in earlier programmes, namely: Nice Work If You Can Get It (July 2) and Now You Has Jazz (Aug. 20).

Other songs played on the BBC national networks of which we were aware over the last four months were:

**The Russell Davies Archive:** The Spaniard That Blighted My Life (July 17) – Changes (July 24)

**Chris Evans Breakfast Show:** You Are My Sunshine (Sept. 21)

**Elaine Paige on Sunday**: I Love You Samantha (July 2) – Razzle Dazzle (Aug. 6) – Talk to the Animals (Oct. 1) - Well Did You Evah! (Oct. 15)

**Don Black:** Moonlight Bay (with Gary) (July 16) – Gone Fishin' (Aug. 6)

**Paul O'Grady:** (Oh! Baby Mine) I Get So Lonely (July 16)

**Anneka Rice - The Happening:** Gone Fishin' (July 14)

**Liza Tarbuck:** Well Did You Evah! (Oct. 7)

**Steve Wright in the Afternoon:** Don't Fence Me In (July 21)

**The Radio 2 Arts Show with Jonathan Ross:** Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah (Oct. 5)

**Jazz Record Requests:** (Radio3) – Now You Has Jazz (Sep. 16) – Mr. Crosby and Mr. Mercer (Oct. 14)

**Ten Years on 2** (BBC Radio4 Extra) – A repeat of a programme from 1977 in which Terry Wogan reviewed ten years of Radio2. The 14-part series about Bing in 1973 was mentioned and we heard a brief excerpt from the first programme.

**Chris Hawkins** (BBC Radio6): Swinging on a Star (Aug. 28)

There was another treat for us on July 4 as BBC Radio4 Extra re-broadcast Bing being interviewed in the *Sounds Natural* programme. This was originally recorded on July 28, 1975 and first broadcast on January 26, 1976. Interviewed by Derek Jones, Bing made various bird calls and discussed other wildlife matters. The producer, John F. Burton later described the recording of the programme:

> ...This was duly arranged and the regular *Sounds Natural* interviewer, the late Derek Jones, a popular West Country broadcaster, and I arrived together with a BBC recording engineer based in London. As soon as we had set up our recording gear ready to go, Bing joined us and quickly made us feel at home. I explained the form that the programme would take. This included the subsequent insertion of sound recordings from the BBC's collection of wildlife sounds to illustrate his anecdotes and memories, plus extracts I had selected from a few of the songs that he had recorded that were appropriate to the programme's theme.
>
> I had previously discovered that he was a very good mimic of those American wild birds with which he was familiar. In discussing these with him, I mentioned that one would be an extract from 'My Blue Heaven', which refers to the call of the whip-poor-will, a bird related to our nightjar, which also calls at night. Bing said he had sung so many different songs in his lifetime and he couldn't remember them all including that one. So rather self-consciously in the presence of such a famous crooner, I crooned the first couple of lines to him, which sparked his memory and he joined in, quipping at the end, 'We should have got together sooner, John!' Other songs of Bing's that I included were 'Mr Meadowlark', where Bing gives very good imitations of the song of this American bird of fields and meadows, and bobwhite. The bobwhite is a common small American gamebird related to our quail whose name is onomatopoeic: its typical call sounding like a whistled 'bob-bob-white', also mimicked perfectly by Bing.
>
> To demonstrate just how good his imitations were, in the final programme as transmitted, I subsequently added actual sound recordings of these birds for comparison.
>
> Provided by me with a series of questions in addition to his own that I knew would launch Bing on a string of his wildlife memories, Derek, a masterly interviewer, evoked a delightfully chatty conversation that pleased me immensely. Bing had been a keen wildfowler, hunting within United States laws, but his concern for the conservation of water birds and other wildlife was sincere.
>
> After the interview had finished, Bing, Derek, the recording engineer and I continued to chat for another hour about birds, fishing, colour blindness (from which Bing suffered) and other topics. Derek and I both felt that Bing genuinely enjoyed chatting about his interests in wildlife and its conservation as a change from being asked about his show business career...
>
> Altogether, as Derek Jones wrote in his account of the occasion (*Microphones and Muddy Boots*, David & Charles, Newton Abbot, Devon, 1987), it was 'two hours of absolute joy'.

## The local radio presenters

**Several of the presenters really did us proud in marking the 40th anniversary. We had emailed many of them and they responded well.**

**Gerald Jackson's** used his two programmes on local radio - "Unforgettable" on Radio Lancashire on Sunday afternoons at 4 p.m. and the other, the similarly named "Gerald Jackson: Unforgettable" on Radio Manchester on Sunday nights at 10pm, to provide a Crosby bonanza on October 15. The Radio Lancashire show included 12 Crosby songs and he had another three on his Manchester show that night. I emailed Gerald to thank him. During the 4-month period until the end of October, Gerald also played:

It's Easy to Remember (July 2) – Dear Hearts and Gentle People (July 2) – Sunday, Monday or Always (July 9) – Thanks (July 16) – Learn to Croon (July 23) – Love in Bloom (July 30) – The Waiter, the Porter and the Upstairs Maid (Aug. 6) – Send in the Clowns (Aug. 6) – They Didn't Believe Me (Aug. 6) – Memories (Aug. 13) – Once and for Always (Sep. 3) – Don't Fence Me In (Sep. 10) – Some Enchanted Evening (Sep. 10) – Dinah (Sep. 17) - Never in a Million Years (Sep. 17) – Far

Away Places (Oct. 22)

**Unforgettable with Bob Roberts:** (BBC Surrey) – We had also alerted Bob to the 40th anniversary of Bing's passing and to fit in with this he told Bing's story in four weekly instalments starting on September 24. In all he played an incredible 26 tracks over the four weeks and at the same time he gave much information about Bing's career. In the show on October 1st, Bob asked for memories of Bing's performance in Brighton in 1977 and he got some lovely heart-warming reminiscences phoned in from his listeners. It was a loving tribute and I have thanked Bob profusely.

During the 4-month period until the end of October, Bob also played: You Came a Long Way from St Louis (July 16) – I Whistle a Happy Tune (Sep. 3).

Bill Rennells ***Harmony Night*** show on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet is another presenter who is very happy to play Bing in response to requests. Following approaches from Stan White and your editor, he mounted a tribute to Bing on October 8th and played no less than 16 songs during his show. He used an outline I had provided to link some of the songs and he had many requests and nice stories from his listeners as well. It was good to hear requests from our members Stan White, Ian Lawrence and Len Hawkings too. Bill finished his programme with Bing singing "That's What Life Is All About". Naturally, I have thanked Bill on your behalf.

Apart from this, in the 4-month period until the end of October, Bill played Dream a Little of Me – Yours Is My Heart Alone (for Ian) – I Can't Get Started (for Stan) – A Ghost of a Chance (for Ian) – The Kiss in Your Eyes – Keeping Out of Mischief Now (for Stan) – Old Cape Cod (for Stan) – Way Down Yonder in New Orleans – Love You Funny Thing – McNamara's Band.

**John Lipscombe** at BBC Radio Cumbria continues his good work by typically playing five Crosby songs every month. He remembered Bing on October 14 giving an outline of his career and he put together a medley comprising "True Love", excerpts from "In a Little Spanish Town" / "It's Been a Long, Long Time" / "Galway Bay" and "Moonlight Becomes You".

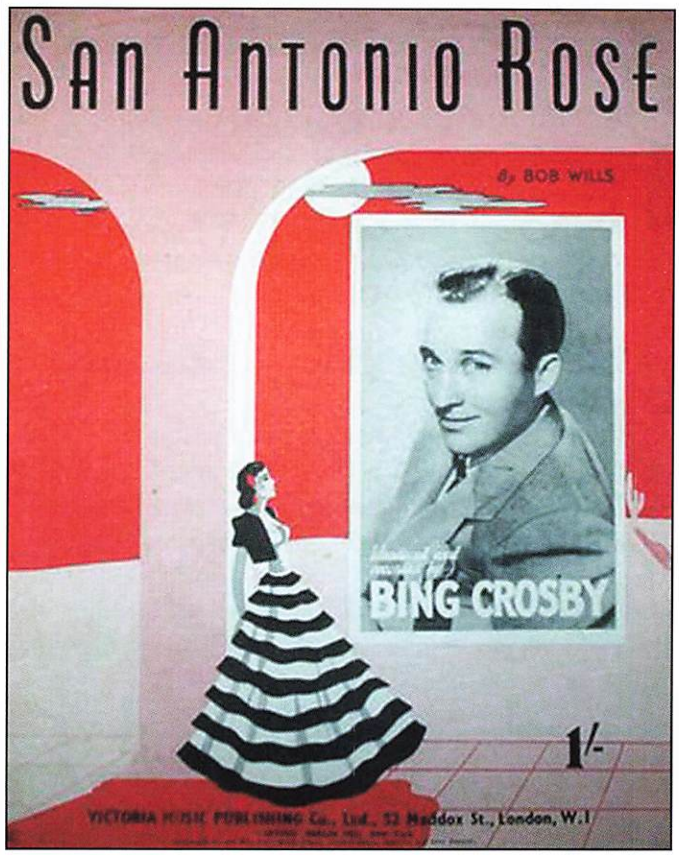
John's colleague at Radio Cumbria, our old friend **Harry King**, included an excellent tribute to Bing on his October 15 show. Starting with the Palladium intro, Harry used interview snippets with Bing, Mary Crosby and Val Doonican to link five Bing songs. Later in the show, he told a lovely story about meeting with Bing at Cockermouth in 1966. Harry followed up his Crosby tribute on his October 22 programme with another very large dose of Bing, playing "C'est Magnifique / Taking a Chance on Love"; "The Pleasure of Your Company"; the whole Crosby Medley from the Palladium; "Gone Fishin'" (with Ted Rogers); "Open Up Your Heart" (with Bob Hope and Rosemary Clooney); "Great Day" and finally "That's What Life Is All About" (from Dorothy Chandler Pavilion).

**The Late Paul Barnes**, the big band, jazz, two-hour show hosted by Paul over seven BBC local radio stations and on the Internet starting at 11 p.m. on Saturday nights fits in Bing tracks which are appropriate to the theme of his show. Paul makes a point of playing Bing tracks on his first programme of each month using an old ICC calendar. He was amused by this clever acrostic from a listener:

**B**aia 11-2-45
**I** apologise 19-6-31
**N**ever in a million years 28-2-37
**G**irl of my dreams 9-6-39

**C**alcutta 2-8-58
**R**eturn to paradise 9-12-63
**O**h lonesome me 29-10-63
**S**an Antonio Rose 16-12-40
**B**allerina 3-12-47
**Y**ou do 4-6-47

Must have been a serious fan. Hope it was one of our members. Paul marked the 40th anniversary by playing "Straight Down the Middle", "Along the Way to Waikiki" and "Tomorrow's My Lucky Day".




BBC Radio Lincolnshire's **Howard Leader** has a programme of big band swing and balladeers which goes out each Sunday afternoon and Bing is featured regularly. Howard remembered the 40th anniversary by reading out my email to him and playing "I Apologise", and later "San Antonio Rose". In an earlier show, ICC member Graham Pascoe from Australia had been in touch with Howard and had wanted to hear a non-Bing track called "Let's Go Home". Initially this could not be traced but Stan White came to the rescue providing a

version by Harry James. Graham also supplied a three-in-a-row medley which included Bing singing "I Whistle a Happy Tune".

Other songs heard in the 4-month period included: Sioux City Sue – When My Dream Boat Comes Home – Siboney – Remember Me? – Maria Bonita – You're in Kentucky Sure As You're Born – Johnny Doughboy – Granada –Just You, Just Me – I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter – Let's Sing Like a Dixieland Band – September in the Rain (my request) – Keeping Out of Mischief Now (for Stan White) – Helpless (for Stan White) – On The 10:10 From Ten-Ten-Tennessee (dedicated to Graham and your Editor).

********

As usual, I've had a look at the BBC website to see what other Crosby songs have been played in the last four months. Although not all the presenters use the site, the following have been shown as being played on the local BBC radio stations. Most of these shows have a "listen again" facility. Why not drop a line to your local radio station and ask for a Bing record to be played to note 40 years since Bing's passing? It only takes a minute or two to fire off an email. Also, please thank the presenters for playing Bing.

**Beverley Humphreys presents *Beverley's World of Music*:** (BBC Radio Wales) – Beverly responded to my email about the 40th anniversary by playing Bing singing "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams" on her October 15 show - and she gave me a nice mention too. Another ten Crosby tracks were played over the 4-month period.
**Chris Needs:** (BBC Radio Wales) – Straight Down the Middle (Oct. 14 - my request, ICC promoted)
**David Allen:** (BBC Radio Surrey) – True Love (with Rosie) (Sep. 9) – Where the Blue of the Night (Oct. 14 – requested by Gwen Harvey. Her letter and the email from your Editor were read out on air.)
**Get It On...with Bryan Burnett:** (Radio Scotland) – Don't Fence Me In (July 3)
**Jo Good** (Radio London) – Little Sir Echo (Oct, 11)
**Marc Griffiths:** (BBC Radio Cymru) – Busy Doing Nothing (Sep. 16)
**Graham Pass:** (BBC Wiltshire) – Straight Down the Middle (Aug. 13) – Nice Work If You Can Get It (Aug. 27)
**Mal Pope:** (BBC Radio Wales) – Straight Down the Middle (July 21)
**Neil Foster:** (BBC Radio York) – Style (Sep. 3) – True Love (Sep. 10) – How Are Things in Glocca Morra? (Sep. 10) – Well Did You Evah! (Sep. 10) and (Oct.15 – ICC member Keith Richmond's request)
**Roy Noble:** (BBC Radio Wales) – You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby (Aug. 13)
**Michael Poulter:** (BBC Tees). Michael highlighted the 40th anniversary on his show on October 15 playing eight Bing songs: Swinging on a Star; Let a Smile Be Your Umbrella; Sentimental Music; I Can't Begin to Tell You; When My Baby Smiles at Me; Now Is the Hour; How About You; and Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive. I emailed him to congratulate him on the show. He had earlier used "The Best Things in Life Are Free" on July 30 and October 8.
**Sunday Club with John Bennett**: (Radio Ulster) – Sam's Song (Sept. 10) – Now Is the Hour (Oct. 15 – my email was read out)

## Serenade Radio

This on-line radio station (www.serenade-radio.com) was born out of a desperate need to hear those great songs from that golden era of song writing. Not just the occasional one-off song, lost in a sea of pop mediocrity, but all day every day. Our member **John Walton** is one of their presenters and he broadcasts his hour-long 'Crooners Club' on Fridays at midday (UK time). On October 13, he put on a Crosby Special and this was a superb show containing 15 Bing songs and expertly linked by John. He highlighted how Bing's pitch and timbre changed over the years whilst the tonal quality remained "quite astonishing." John commented on Mr. Crosby's "peerless sense of rhythm and timing", telling the story of how the shy young man from Spokane developed a carefree persona for public consumption. He gave out the incredible statistics of the groaner's career before finishing with the BBC version of "Once in a While". Well done, John!

Also, on October 14th, Serenade Radio played a Bing track every hour.

## France

**France Musique** is a French public radio station owned by Radio France and Frans van der Kolff noticed a 40th anniversary tribute to Le Bing in an episode of the programme *'42e Rue,* which was presented by Laurent Valière on October 8. My French is not good enough to comment on the programme in depth but it seemed to tell the story thoroughly during the 55 minutes with a lot of music being played. You may still find the programme at:

https://www.francemusique.fr/emissions/42e-rue/bing-crosby-chanteur-et-acteur-americain-37050

## Podcast

Frans van der Kolff also wrote as follows:

"You might be interested in a podcast series I recently discovered, which I believe has not yet been mentioned here. It is named "Legends of Las Vegas". The 2-hour podcast of May 28, 2017 features Bing. https://player.fm/series/legends-of-las-vegas/bing-crosby More on the podcast series:

"Singer Gary Williams celebrates the Legends of Las Vegas with two hours of great music and chat. Originally broadcast on The Wireless for Age UK for anyone who remembers the great David Jacobs and

Desmond Carrington from BBC Radio 2 and enjoys today's Clare Teal, Don Black and Leo Green."

The podcast series contains episodes on many other stars, like Rosemary Clooney, Nelson Eddy, Billy Eckstine and Count Basie to name just a few. I won't comment on its title 'Legends of Las Vegas'... But it's a nice show!

The podcast on Bing follows Bing's career, contains many of his songs (and songs of his contemporaries) and a nice anecdote which I haven't heard before. When Paul Whiteman was asked how he found working with Bing, he commented: "It wasn't a case of how I found him, I could never find him!" Recommended!"

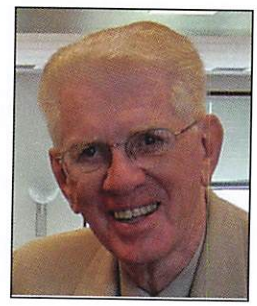
## Australia

Bob Rogers of Sydney's 2-CH put on a massive tribute to Bing on October 14 during his six-hour show. This took the form of two separate one hour segments devoted to Crosby records. I was able to listen live to the first hour and recorded it for those attending Jason Liddiard's get-together in Warrington. At the meeting, we also listened to a part of the second hour.

Each Monday morning from 9 to 11 (Australian Eastern Time) ICC member Graham Pascoe presents 'Morning Music' on community radio station 2MCE-FM, located in Bathurst, New South Wales on the campus of Charles Sturt University. Usually he plays recordings of popular music from the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Needless to say, he usually plays a couple of Crosby recordings and on October 15, he included a bigger-than-usual dose of Bing to mark the anniversary. The previous day, his colleague, Jeff Cox, devoted the whole two hours of his "Here It Comes Again" show on the same station to Mr. Crosby. The station broadcasts on 92.3 FM in Bathurst and its programs are streamed (but not archived) on www.2mce.org.

**Malcolm Macfarlane** macwilmslo@aol.com

# GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'



**Gord recalls a man who played a very important part in the Crosby career.**

Ken Carpenter was a role model for all radio announcers and presenters. His rich, dulcet delivery set a standard that a generation of broadcasters tried to emulate. Bing often called him "the man with the golden voice". High praise, indeed, from the incomparable singer whose own voice was acclaimed as "golden".

I first met Ken in 1974 when I was taping interviews for my radio series, *The Crosby Years*. He invited me to his charming California home where we reminisced about his years with Bing and his own impressive career.

"In 1936 I was working as a staff announcer," he told me, "at radio station KFI in Los Angeles. Bing at that time was already starring on *The Kraft Music Hall*. The show was originating in New York and they were cutting Bing in from Hollywood. The network then decided to move the show west. So they held auditions for a local-based announcer and I was fortunate to be chosen. I was with Bing on various shows for over 25 years."

A native of the farming community of Avon, Illinois, Ken was born in 1900, the son of Barlow Carpenter, a Universalist minister, and grew up in neighbouring Peoria. His career in broadcasting began in the formative era of network radio.

"I recall my first memory of California. I drove from Peoria with my wife and six week-old baby. I was looking for a job. I remember driving down Franklin Avenue in Hollywood on our way to my wife`s parents home, where we were going to stay until we got a place of our own. As we drove along we could hear from almost every open window Bing Crosby singing *I Surrender Dear*, or one of the other great songs he introduced. My first memories of California are centred round the sound of his voice. That was what you heard everywhere you went."

Ken`s career took off in 1935 when he was chosen by NBC to announce the annual Rose Bowl football game. He quickly became the network`s most sought after "voice", His other well remembered radio assignments included the drama, One Man's Family, Lux Theatre, (on both radio and TV), the Al Jolson Show and the Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show, where he was a comedy foil to the famous ventriloquist's wooden dummy.

"It was a lot of fun". Ken said with a chuckle, "working with Edgar and Charlie. It was so real that you almost thought that Charlie was a real person. I would find myself wanting to get the microphone in front of him. That happened with everyone who worked with Edgar and Charlie."

Ken was an original – a broadcasting pioneer. "In those early days of network radio everything was live. We did shows twice; once for the east and once for the west. We did have recorded transcriptions but the networks insisted that you do the shows live. However, we were fortunate that we only had to broadcast The Kraft Music Hall once. It originated at 6:00 PM Los

Angeles time, which was 9:00 PM on the east coast."

**Ken working with Bing on the "Christmas Sing" programme in 1959.**

As we all know, it was Bing who first recorded a network program, when his own company, Bing Crosby Enterprises, developed magnetic tape in the 1940s, despite resistance from the networks to taped programming he persevered and very quickly all musical programs and dramas were being recorded.

Ken Carpenter was always amazed at Bing's total recall and his ability to ad lib. "He knew everybody's lines and was never at a loss for words. He was an early riser and would begin his day vocalizing and studying his lines for either the radio show or a movie. He was always a great reader. An avid sports fan, who could quote the batting averages of every major league ball player, he followed all sports. His first love, of course, was golf. He had real insight in recognizing the talents of young golfers. He was a natural athlete and could go to any country club in the world and play with the members."

When talking with Ken, as I did on two separate occasions, his memories of Bing were warm and amusing. Their rapport was natural and engaging. "Bing was a quick study and didn't have to go over his script and mark it all up. That was the whole idea – to make the script sound unrehearsed. The writers wanted to capture Bing's own way of speaking. It was his attitude at the microphone that created an atmosphere of relaxation. We tried to maintain that attitude at all times. We had difficulty with some performers, like great opera stars who had never done skits before, but Bing was the type of person who could make other people feel at ease. It was very natural for him.

"Much has been said," Ken reminded me, "about Bing's habit of dress in those radio days and it's all true. Being colour blind, he couldn't tell the difference between certain colours. He had one old favourite Hawaiian shirt that he wore often. It was always washed and cleaned but that shirt would appear week after week. He always wore a hat – and I recall one New Year's Eve when he appeared in full dress without wearing a collar. It was quite a casual sight."

**Ken Carpenter (centre) with Bing and Gord in 1976.**

In September of 1976 my wife and I were privileged to be with Ken, Bing and Kathryn and my pal Rich Little at the annual radio awards in San Francisco. When Ken presented a Lifetime Achievement Award to Bing that night, their deep friendship and mutual admiration was evident to everyone in attendance. The after dinner speeches were recorded for my radio series *The Crosby Years* and can be heard on *The Prologue*.

Ken Carpenter was 84 when he left us in 1984. He was a kind and gentle man and a devoted husband, father and grandfather. His beautiful mellifluous voice was the voice we all heard introducing our Bing on radio and television during those never to be forgotten "Crosby Years".

**Gord Atkinson**

## Once In A While

**Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:**

**Glen Campbell,** the singer and guitarist passed away on August 8th at the age of 81. He was born on April 22, 1936 in Billstown, near Delight, Arkansas, the seventh son of 12 children. At the age of four, Glen was given his first guitar, a five-dollar instrument bought from a Sears Roebuck mail order catalogue. With the aid

of records by the jazz guitarists Django Reinhardt and Barney Kessel, he quickly became a skilled player. After dropping out of school at 16, he joined the country and western band of his uncle Dick Bills, performing around Albuquerque, New Mexico. Within a few years, Campbell was leading his own band, the Western Wranglers. After moving to Los Angeles in search of work as a session musician, he became a member of the renowned team of instrumentalists known as the Wrecking Crew. They played on hit records by Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, the Righteous Brothers, the Beach Boys, the Monkees and many others. He was also one of the backing musicians on Bing's 1963 album *The Great Country Hits*.

Though Campbell's inability to read music occasionally made him the butt of jokes in the studio, the esteem in which he was held by the Beach Boys was evident when he was asked to tour with the group in early 1965. Campbell was a temporary replacement for the group's leader, Brian Wilson, who had retired from live appearances after suffering a panic attack on a flight from Los Angeles to Houston in December 1964. Campbell played and sang on stage with the group for three months before giving way to Bruce Johnston.

His first pop hit, "By the Time I Get to Phoenix," composed by the then unknown Jimmy Webb, came in 1967. Campbell became a close friend of Webb and "Wichita Lineman" and "Galveston" were top ten hits in America and top 20 hits Britain in 1969.

Thanks to his chart success, Campbell was now in demand for television and film appearances. He appeared with Bing on the *Hollywood Palace* show of December 21, 1968, singing "1432 Franklin Pike Circle Hero" with the groaner.

**Bing and Glen at the Hollywood Palace**

Following this, Glen, a keen golfer, took part in the Crosby Pro-Am at Pebble Beach on several occasions.

Campbell had his own TV show, the *Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour*, between 1969 and 1972, and starred with John Wayne in the western movie *True Grit* (1969). He also sang the film's title song. The following year, Campbell took the lead role in the film *Norwood.*

The hit records continued throughout the 1970s, as Campbell's choice of songs and vocal stance veered towards a middle of the road approach. A revival of Conway Twitty's 1958 hit "It's Only Make Believe" was a top 10 single in 1970 on both sides of the Atlantic.

Like many country singers, Campbell recorded duets, first with Bobbie Gentry (their version of "All I Have to Do Is Dream" was No 3 in the UK in 1969) and later with Anne Murray, Rita Coolidge and Tanya Tucker. Campbell began an affair with Tucker, who was half his age, and the relationship scandalised the straitlaced country music establishment until it ended in mutual recrimination in 1981.

Soon afterwards, Campbell married his fourth wife, Kim Woollen, and announced that he had given up alcohol and drugs, although a subsequent relapse in 2003 led to a brief jail sentence for drunk-driving. His first three marriages – to Diane Kirk, Billie Nunley and Sarah Barg, with all of whom he had children – ended in divorce.

Campbell became a born-again Christian and with Kim joined a Messianic synagogue. His three children by Kim eventually joined his backing group and Campbell's later performances were divided into those for secular and those for religious audiences. In the early 1990s, he had a residency at the Grand Palace theatre in Branson, Missouri. He published a somewhat self-serving autobiography, *Rhinestone Cowboy*, in 1994.

In 2011 Campbell was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, after which his album *Ghost on the Canvas* was released and he made a farewell tour of North America and Europe. The tour, and Campbell's struggle with Alzheimer's, was documented in a film, *Glen Campbell: I'll Be Me* (2014). Campbell, with his co-writer Julian Raymond, was nominated for best original song Oscar for the theme, "I'm Not Gonna Miss You." *(Editor: My own view is that the film should not have been made as it showed Campbell in a confused state. I thought that it was a very sad way to remember a great artist whom I had seen put on a superb show at Branson in 2006.)*

In 2012 he won a Grammy lifetime achievement award, and his album *Adiós*, recorded in 2012-13, was released earlier this year. Campbell is survived by Kim, five sons, three daughters and 10 grandchildren.

**Jerry Lewis** passed away on August 20 at the age of 91. He was born Joseph Levitch on March 16, 1926 in Newark, New Jersey. The son of entertainers who used the professional names Danny and Rachael Lewis, he first appeared on stage at the age of six singing "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" with his father. He attended high school in Irvington, New Jersey

but left to earn a living after only one year. He developed a vaudeville act in which he would mime comic accompaniments to offstage recordings of popular singers of the day. Lewis toured with this act for four years until he met Dean Martin, then a small-time baritone, at the 500 Club in Atlantic City. Lewis suggested that they join forces. At first they performed separately to only moderate applause but on July 25, 1946 they resolved to abandon their written routines and ad lib instead. From that moment they worked as a team.

They improvised witticisms, interrupted each other's acts, pelted one another with celery and tripped over waiters. Yet the audience cried for more. Within a year, their asking price soared from $350 to $5,000 a week and they became the best-loved comedy team in America. They had successful engagements at the Copacabana in New York and at Slapsie Maxie's in Hollywood, where the film producer Hal Wallis saw their act and signed them to a five-year contract with Paramount. He rushed them into their first film, *My Friend Irma*, in 1949. Though only in supporting roles, they proved the strongest element in an otherwise lacklustre comedy and, after a sequel, *My Friend Irma Goes West*, in 1950, they were rewarded with their first starring vehicle, *At War with the Army*, in 1951. Over the next six years, Martin and Lewis made 13 further films together, including *Pardners* (1956), a remake of the Crosby movie *Rhythm on the Range*. Having devastated the Army, they repeated the exercise with the other armed services. In *Sailor Beware* (1952), they scuttled the Navy and in *Jumping Jacks* (1953), they sent the parachute corps into free fall. In all these films, the joke hinged on the audience response to Lewis's ability to convey someone in imminent need of a straitjacket. Some found them embarrassing.

**Bing and Jerry on the *Road to Bali* set**

Martin and Lewis had a successful radio show on NBC and Bing was their guest on October 19, 1951. They repaid this guest shot by appearing on the *Bing Crosby Show for Chesterfield* on November 7 the same year.

On June 21, 1952, Bing and Bob Hope were the hosts of the 14-hour telethon to raise funds for the American Olympic team and Martin and Lewis took part also. Hope and Crosby had a cameo appearance in the Martin & Lewis film *Scared Stiff* and this was reciprocated by the boys showing up in *Road to Bali*. Martin and Lewis came top in the U.S.A. movie box office stars poll for 1952. Bing was in fourth place

Starting on June 22, 1953 Martin and Lewis made a notoriously unsuccessful London dé but at the Palladium, where their knockabout routines were greeted with catcalls and cries of "Rubbish". Wrapping up the 53-minute act, Lewis ventured "When we return ..." only to be drowned in a chorus of "Never again".

Martin and Lewis were never a natural team and Dean Martin, who had gifts of his own, came to feel that Lewis was holding him back. Only one director, Frank Tashlin, fully grasped this. He worked with them twice as a team – on *Artists and Models* (1955) and on their last film together, *Hollywood or Bust* (1956) – but kept their contributions apart, ensuring that Lewis's slapstick never spiked Dean Martin's crooning and wisecracks. After the team split up, Tashlin steered Lewis into a new phase in his career, as a director.

Production of *Hollywood or Bust* was fraught from first to last. Martin and Lewis were not on speaking terms and years later Jerry Lewis trashed the whole partnership. "In order to maintain the Martin-Lewis relationship", he said, "I went through a 10-year period of lies." They fulfilled one last engagement, at the Copacabana on July 25 1956, and then went their separate ways. On September 30, 1958, Bing engineered a brief reunion for the two men when he and Dean Martin gate-crashed the Eddie Fisher TV show when Lewis was performing.

Between 1957 and 1965 Lewis continued to work for Paramount, for which he made 17 more films. These included four directed by Frank Tashlin – *Cinderfella* (1960), a male variant on the traditional pantomime; *It's Only Money* (1962); *Who's Minding the Store?* (1964); and *The Disorderly Orderly* (1965). Beginning with *The Bellboy* in 1960, Lewis also began directing. Under his Paramount contract he directed six films for the studio. *The Nutty Professor* (1963), with Lewis in the title role, was the most inventive. A variation on Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde it concerned a pug-ugly scientist who concocts a secret potion that turns him into a singing sensation. As well as reversing the Stevenson story so that the "monster" is more handsome than his master, it enabled Lewis to mount a wicked parody of Dean Martin's crooning style. *Boeing-Boeing* (1965), in which he co-starred with Tony Curtis, was his last film for

Paramount, after which he signed a non-exclusive contract with Columbia.

From this point, his career began to wane. None of his films made money, one (*Don't Raise the Bridge, Lower the River,* shot in 1968) was released only as the second half of a double bill. *Which Way to the Front?* which he had made in 1970, became his last film for 11 years.

He had starred in a major live television series in 1963 but the opening night on September 21 is remembered as one of the greatest fiascos in television history. The ratings for "The Jerry Lewis Show" were very poor and it was replaced mid-season by *The Hollywood Palace*.

After a short, successful season at the Olympia theatre in Paris in 1971, Lewis's career stalled. An attempted Broadway dé but in 1976, in a production of *Hellzapoppin*, sank amid a torrent of hostile reviews.

Lewis's heath also began to deteriorate. In 1959 he had had his first heart attack. In 1965 he injured his back in a fall and was prescribed a painkiller to which he became rapidly addicted. In 1982 he suffered a second, massive coronary. In 1992 he underwent an operation for prostate cancer.

In 1981 he was forced to file for bankruptcy. A costly divorce coincided with the collapse of a cinema chain which he had set up. Lewis returned to the cinema in 1981 with the appropriately named *Hardly Working*, but his career was sporadic after that. The director Martin Scorsese offered him a straight role in 1983 in his film *King of Comedy*, playing a talk-show host kidnapped by a fan (Robert De Niro). His last performances were in *American Dreams* (1992), by the former Yugoslav director Emir Kusturica, and in Pete Chelsom's *Funny Bones* (1994).

Lewis was a generous man who gave unsparingly of his time as chairman of the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Every year, he hosted a telethon on Labor Day to raise money for the treatment of the disease. Among other things, this helped finance the construction of a multi-million dollar Institute for Muscular Disease in New York.

In 1982, he published his autobiography, "Jerry Lewis in Person". His first marriage, to Patti Palmer, was dissolved. He married secondly, in 1983, SanDee Pitnick, who survives him with their daughter and five sons of his first marriage. Another son predeceased him.

**Sir Bruce Forsyth,** the English television presenter and entertainer whose career spanned more than 75 years died on August 18 at the age of 89. In 2012, *Guinness World Records* recognised Forsyth as having the longest television career for a male entertainer. He came to national attention from the mid-1950s through the ITV series *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*. Since then he hosted several game shows, including *The Generation Game*, *Play Your Cards Right*, *The Price Is Right* and *You Bet!*. He co-presented *Strictly Come Dancing* from 2004 to 2013. Bruce was known for his catchphrases, "Nice to see you, to see you nice" and "Didn't he (/she/they) do well?".

It was through golf that Bruce and Bing got together. First of all in 1972 at Southport and Ainsdale Golf Club in Lancashire, Bing golfed in a charity event for the National Society for Cancer Relief with Gary Player and Bruce Forsyth (handicap 10). A crowd of 6,000 watched the golf with many other British stars taking part.

> The road to the clubhouse was a lavish production glittering with stars. And the biggest star of them all, swinging Bing Crosby, stole the show.
>
> The "Old Groaner" played Pied Piper to a huge golfing crowd at Southport yesterday with a new Road partner—British comedian Bruce Forsyth. And what a laughter-filled road it was, with the nonchalance of Bing, and shades of Hope humour from Bruce. They won the biggest gallery of the day from the 6,000 crowd at the Southport and Ainsdale course where they teamed up with South African golfer Gary Player in the £5,000 Texaco Pro-Am Tournament.
>
> The crowd roared with laughter at the first tee as Bruce told fans clamouring for Bing's autograph; "For two of his, you get one of Sinatra's." They roared again as pipe-smoking Bing told the inevitable funny story about Bob Hope. And there was more mirth after Bruce sank a difficult putt from the edge of the first green for a birdie and Bing bowed in exaggerated admiration. At the next hole, the two delighted the crowd by putting simultaneously.
>
> When it was over, Bing was full of praise for his partner. Together they had made a net score of 65. And Gary, who scored 71, smiled; "It's been a real fun day." (*Daily Express*, September 25, 1972)

**Bruce Forsyth (right) with Bing and Gary Player at Southport in 1972.**

Subsequently on August 22, 1976, Bing captained a team of USA celebrities against a British team led by Sean Connery on the King's Course at Gleneagles, Scotland. Bruce played in the event which was

organized by The Saints and Sinners Club of Scotland and the Scottish Taverners Club and was watched by a large crowd. Following this, Bing remained on the King's Course at Gleneagles for the next few days to tape further *International Pro-Celebrity Golf* television programs. In one match, Bing and Johnny Miller took on Bruce and Tony Jacklin and Bruce recalled the occasion.

> I don't like to name-drop, but look at this list of names for when the American team came over to play against the UK members at Gleneagles: Bing Crosby, Burt Lancaster, George C. Scott, Robert Stack, Phil Harris, Steve Forrest, Dick Martin, Jack Lemmon and Alan Shepard, the astronaut who took a golf ball to the moon and actually hit it while he was there. It was one of the most wonderful golf tournaments ever. Sean Connery was our captain, and, among others, we had James Hunt, Jackie Stewart, Max Bygraves, Henry Cooper, Val Doonican and Jimmy Tarbuck in our team. What a crowd. . . . The day I played with the American crooner Bing Crosby, Bing turned on the heat when we got to the last few holes. He gave us a bit of a thrashing and won the game.
> (Bruce Forsyth writing in his autobiography *Bruce: The Autobiography*, page 222)

**Shelley Berman,** the comedian and actor passed away on September 1 at the age of 92. Berman was a pioneer of a new brand of comedy that could evoke laughter from such matters as air travel discomforts and small children who answer the telephone. He helped pave the way for Bob Newhart, Woody Allen, Jerry Seinfeld and other standup comedians who fashioned their routines around the follies and frustrations of modern living.

Berman made the first of many appearances on The Ed Sullivan Show in 1959. That year he issued his first album, "Inside Shelley Berman". It won a gold record and received the first-ever Grammy Award for the spoken word. Two more albums achieved gold status. Along with his busy schedule in nightclubs and auditoriums, he fulfilled his ambition to be an actor. He appeared in a Broadway play, *The Boys Against the Girls*, in 1959 and a musical, *A Family Affair*, in 1962. His film debut came in 1964 with the adaptation of Gore Vidal's hit stage drama *The Best Man*, starring Henry Fonda and Cliff Robertson.

Berman's comedy career stalled in 1963. He was performing his act before an audience for a documentary-style NBC show, "Comedian Backstage", when a telephone ringing interrupted him; it was the second night it had happened. He stormed backstage and ranted at everyone in sight. His outburst, edited to make him appear temperamental, was included in the telecast. "Once you're known as being difficult, it becomes too hard to deal with management and even fellow artists," he remarked in 1986. The bookings fell off, and Berman returned to acting, with little luck. He and his wife, Sarah, were forced to file for bankruptcy. He found work in television series such as "The Twilight Zone", "Rawhide" and "Peter Gunn" and occasional movies, including *Divorce American Style*. He became active in regional theater and also worked his old routines before college and lecture audiences. For more than 20 years he taught comedy at the University of Southern California. Late in his career, he played Nat David, father of Larry David, on HBO's "Curb Your Enthusiasm". With dialogue improvised by its cast, the comedy series gave Berman the opportunity to return to his improv roots and introduced him to a new generation of TV viewers. He retired from performing in 2014 after being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. His connection with Bing comes through his two appearances with Mr. Crosby on the Hollywood Palace show in the 1960s.

## THE WAY WE WERE

**The section of the magazine where we look at what Bing was doing in years gone by.**

## 100 YEARS AGO

Bing (aged 14) returned for his second year at Gonzaga High School on September 12, 1917. The syllabus was:

> Religious Instruction - English - Latin (6 hours a week) - Greek (4 hours a week) - Algebra II - Medieval to Modern History - Military Drill - Elocution and Debate.

He was elected as Consultor in Second Year High School, Second Division and he captained the "Dreadnoughts" football team against the "Submarines" in the Junior Yard Association Midget League.

In October Bing joined the High School Junior Debating Society and on November 2, he took part in the Second Year High School, Division Two Specimen Public Speaking Competition. He was one of four reciting Poe's poem "Bells."

## 75 YEARS AGO

On August 31, 1942, Bing left Washington DC for a 3-week tour entertaining at army camps and playing benefit golf matches. Amongst the locations visited were Binghamton, NY; Toledo, Ohio; Detroit; Chicago; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Youngstown, Ohio; Kansas City; Cincinnati; Miami, (Oklahoma); Tulsa; Oklahoma City and Houston in Texas. Fred Corcoran, the tournament manager of the PGA, told the press that during the tour, Bing competed in ten golf matches, sold $500,000 in war bonds and raised over $25,000 for war relief. He played to 50,000 spectators and entertained at six army camps during the three weeks. Local press comments were enthusiastic with this from Tulsa being typical.

> A crowd of 2,500, the largest that ever saw a golf match

in Tulsa, followed the match and roared approval of Bing's radio broadcast and war bond sales party which featured at the finish. Bing was in grand form at the entertaining (normal for him), and surpassed even his best previous efforts in the war bond auction by disposing of $315,000.

With Bob Wills and his orchestra playing, Bing sang for at least half an hour after the bond sale. "San Antonio Rose," composed by Wills and made famous by Crosby, was the smash hit of the party. But Bing sang many other request numbers and took time to pass some nice compliments to Wills.
(*Tulsa Daily World,* September 19, 1942)

The crooner arrived back in Hollywood on September 23 and returned to the ***Kraft Music Hall*** on October 1 every week until April 15, 1943. Audience share was 23.1 during the season which relegated the show to thirteenth place in the Hooper ratings. Bob Hope headed the table with a rating of 40.9. Bing's salary was $5,000 per broadcast. Victor Borge, Ken Carpenter, the Music Maids, and Mary Martin remained as fixtures together with John Scott Trotter and the orchestra. The Charioteers became regulars. Other guest stars in the run up to the end of the year included Bob Hope, Milton Berle, Cass Daley. Desi Arnaz, Ginny Simms, Dorothy Lamour, Cliff Edwards, Richard Haydn, Broderick Crawford, Ella Mae Morse Jack Carson, Johnny Mercer and Betty Hutton.

On October 3, Bing and Bob Hope headlined a two-and-half-hour American Women's Voluntary Services show at the Civic Auditorium in San Francisco and $25,000 was raised. The following day, Bing and Earl Fry played against Bob Hope and Mark Fry in a special golf match at Sequoyah Country Club, Oakland, for the benefit of the AWVS. The Fry brothers were local golf professionals.

The film *Road to Morocco* was released nationwide on October 5 and was a box office smash taking $4 million in rental income in its initial release period. The critics liked it too.

> Let us be thankful that Paramount is still blessed with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope, and that it has set its cameras to tailing these two irrepressible wags on another fantastic excursion, *Road to Morocco*, which came to the Paramount yesterday. For the screen, under present circumstances, can hold no more diverting lure than the prospect of Hope and Crosby ambling, as they have done before, through an utterly slaphappy picture, picking up Dorothy Lamour along the way and tossing acid wisecracks at each other without a thought for reason or sense. That is what they are doing in this current reprise on trips to Singapore and Zanzibar and, as a consequence, *Road to Morocco* is Route 1 to delightful "escape."
>
> ...The short of it is that *Road to Morocco* is a daffy, laugh-drafting film. And you'll certainly agree with the camel which, at one point, offers the gratuitous remark, "This is the screwiest picture I was ever in."
> (Bosley Crowther, *The New York Times,* November 12, 1942)

Der Bingle then became heavily involved in recording programs such as Command Performance, Mail Call, Soldiers with Wings, Song Sheet and Personal Album for the Armed Forces Radio Service**.** The format of the *Song Sheet* shows was that Bing sang a couple of songs and then read out the lyrics of the songs at dictation speed. One of the songs featured in one program was "White Christmas" and Bing's Decca recording of it reached number one in the charts on October 31 and stayed there for eleven weeks.

On October 25, Bing golfed at Santa Ana Golf Club in a benefit for the Army Emergency Relief Fund and the following Sunday, he and Bob Hope took part in golf tournaments organized by the Junior Chambers of Commerce in the San Francisco Bay area for the benefit of the AWVS.

> It was probably the biggest single money tournament held in the history of golf. Crosby and Hope defeated Henry Suico and Reno Nardin, shipyard golf kings, 1 up in a nine-hole match played before more than 3000 people at snug Claremont Country Club.
>
> It was a legitimate match but it was practically finished on the sixth when S. A. Reinhard, Oakland banker, stopped Crosby as he was putting for a bird and paid $50,000 to have Bing sing and Hope dance before the big crowd.
> (Bob Blake, *Oakland Tribune,* November 2, 1942)

Meanwhile, to add to his weekly KMH show and the many AFRS shows, he began filming *Dixie* on October 28 and this work continued until mid-February. His co-stars were Dorothy Lamour, Marjorie Reynolds, and Billy de Wolfe. Harry Barris had a small part too.

The film *Star Spangled Rhythm* (in which Bing sang 'Old Glory') was released nationwide on December 31 taking $3.8 million in rental income in its initial release period.

During 1942, Mr. Crosby was paid $298,946 for his services by Decca and he also received $300,000 from Paramount. He had been paid $5000 for each KMH show too. During the year, he had eleven records that became chart hits. However no recordings had been made for Decca since August 1, as the American

Federation of Musicians had imposed a recording ban by its members which continued until September 18, 1943, in the case of Decca.

## 50 YEARS AGO

On September 8, 1967, Bing and Kathryn plus their three children flew in to Dorval Airport, Montreal, Canada. For the next four days, they visited EXPO '67 in Montreal.

During September, Cox Broadcasting Corporation agreed to buy Bing Crosby Productions Inc. for $2 million in shares. Bing was the principal shareholder. Basil Grillo remained as president of the company.

California Seals chairman Barry van Gerbig disclosed that a group including Bing and George Coleman had purchased a minority interest in the Seals.

Also in September, the groaner taped a Dean Martin Show with Lena Horne and Dom DeLuise which was shown on October 19. On October 9, a *Danny Thomas Hour* called "The Demon under the Bed" starring Bing and his daughter Mary Frances plus Joan Collins and George Maharis was shown on NBC-TV. This had been taped in July.

> Bing Crosby made one of his rare TV dramatic appearances, on Danny Thomas' Monday night show for NBC-TV, "The Demon under the Bed." Nothing rare, however, about the role for the vet crooner-actor as he sidled through a characterization of an aging performer packing a load of juice, seeking self. ("Country Girl," etc., etc.).
>
> This time he was followed by a photographer (George Maharis) who hopes to peel off the many masks and find the real Charlie Castle in a still shot or two. The gambit affords director Peter Tewkesbury opportunity to utilize a lot of still photo gimmickry throughout, but it finally seemed a sort of poor man's 'Blow Up.'
>
> Joan Collins was attractive as Crosby's wayward wife, and Mary Frances Crosby, Crosby's eight-year-old daughter, preemed on TV in a role that consisted mainly of effusively greeting her old man.
> (*Variety*, October 11, 1967)

Bing taped *The Jackie Gleason Show* at the Miami Beach Auditorium with Alan King and Liberace on October 22 and the following day he was back in California presiding over a gala entertainment for the "Shirley Temple Black for Congress Committee" at the Thunderbolt Hotel, Millbrae, California. (Note: In 1967 Shirley Temple Black ran for Congress against California Representative Pete McCloskey, on a platform of defending America's involvement in the Vietnam War. She lost but was appointed by Republicans to numerous political posts.)

October 25 saw him guest on *The Joey Bishop Show* with Kathryn Crosby, Dorothy Lamour, Regis Philbin and Matt Monro. This was the famous occasion when Bing sang "Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral" to Regis Philbin.

> ...The show's producers, of course, would have loved for Bing to sing anything that night, but they were afraid to ask him. Then, as the interview progressed, Joey had an idea. He would try to talk him into it by using me as his pawn, right on the air! "Bing, see this kid," Joey said, nodding toward me. "He's the biggest fan you ever had. It would be the biggest thrill of his life if you would sing a song for him. How about 'Too Ra Loo Ra Loo Ral? I was getting nervous. How would Bing react? Well, he turned, looked directly at me, and simply sang the song a cappella. He sounded great. It was so exciting, my head was spinning. How could I tell him what he had meant to me all these years? I should have, but I couldn't.
> (Regis Philbin, writing in *How I Got This Way*, pages 5-6)

El Bingo's only recording session for 1967 took place on October 31 and he sang "Step to the Rear" and three other songs with Ernie Freeman and his Orchestra for Reprise Records. Only two of the songs were issued at the time.

The *Hollywood Palace* show transmitted that day had Bing as the host and Victor Borge, Roger Miller, Gail Martin, and Paul Lynde as principal guests.

Kathryn Crosby's book Bing and Other Things was published on November 1.

December saw Mr. and Mrs. Crosby plus their children arrive in Los Angeles to film a Minute Maid advert as Bing had been asked by the company to return as a product spokesman. He agreed to be a voice-over announcer for the company's television advertisements for its orange juice while Kathryn and the children were shown on screen. Bing and his family also taped their Christmas show for the *Hollywood Palace* which was shown on December 19. While he was in LA, Bing recorded another *Hollywood Palace* show with Peggy Lee which was subsequently shown on January 13, 1968.

The annual Christmas Eve party for the staff and forty-five guests took place at Hillsborough and the year finished with the death of Paul Whiteman and with a special agent of the FBI receiving a five-page letter from a Mr. Tompkins threatening Bing and his family.

# KEEPING TRACK

**Richard Baker has some great news.**

## COMPACT DISCS

Some very exciting news this time around, but first let's cover issues already in hand.

### Judy Garland – Classic Duets (4 CD box set) JSP Records JSP977 Around $20 (US) £18 (UK)

Artists include Frank Sinatra, Gene Kelly, Mickey Rooney, Fred Astaire, Johnny Mercer and others, but I only list the titles with Bing, who has the lion's share. The dates I give are those of original broadcasts rather than of the recording as some of these are not known with precision.

**CD B:**

19. People Will Say We're In Love - *Command Performance #81* / 20. People Will Say We're In Love* / 21. You Tell Me Your Dream (And I'll Tell You Mine) – *20 & 21 both G.I. Journal* #41* / 22. Something To Remember You By - *Command Performance #122* / 23. The Way You Look Tonight - *The Bakers of America Salute to the Armed Forces* 4 June 1944* / 24. Medley: Hand Me Down My Walking Cane / De Camptown Races / Beyond the Blue Horizon / The Music Stopped / My Old Kentucky Home / Alabamy Bound / Goodnight, Wherever You Are - *Command Performance #129** /25. You've Got Me Where You Want Me / 26. Mine / 27. Connecticut / 28. Yah-Ta-Ta, Yah-Ta-Ta (Talk, Talk, Talk) 25 *–28 all Decca studio recordings.*

*First time on CD

**CD C:**

From Philco Radio Time -

1. Wait Till The Sun Shines, Nellie - *27 Nov 1946* / 2. Connecticut - *19 Feb 1947* / 3. For Me and My Gal / 4. Who? / 5. Embraceable You / 6. Confess. *3 – 6 all 6 Oct 1948.*

From "Chesterfield Cigarettes Presents The Bing Crosby Show"

7. Ma, He's Makin Eyes at Me / 8. Maybe It's Because (I Love You Too Much) *7 & 8 both 5 Oct 1949* / 9. Sam's Song (The Happy Tune) - *11 Oct 1950* / 10. Tzena, Tzena, Tzena - *18 Oct 1950* / 11. Boise, Idaho / 12. These Lush Moments / 13. Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* *11 – 13 all 6 Dec 1950* / 14. Just the Way You Are / 15. Hello Ma Baby / In My Merry Oldsmobile Walkin' My Baby Back Home / In My Merry Oldsmobile (comic version) / 16. Call Me up Some Rainy Afternoon *14-16 all 7 Feb 1951* / 17. You're Just in Love *7 March 1951 (not as CD note)* / 18. How Could You Believe Me (When I Said I Loved You When You Know I've Been a Liar All My Life)? *21 March 1951* / 19. Limehouse Blues / 20. April in Paris / 21. Isle of Capri *19 – 21 all 28 March 1951* / 22. When You Wore a Tulip (And I Wore a Big Red Rose) - *21 May 1952* / 23. For Me and My Gal - *28 May 1952* / 24. You're Just in Love * *4 June 1952* / 25. April in Paris - The All Star Review for 1953 (The American Cancer Society)* *-1 April 1953*

*First time on CD

*99 tracks or 109 songs including titles in medleys. Judy had her problems but here we have a bright and vivacious personality bubbling through and on some tracks, some from the hilarious radio comedy sketches with Bing, the laughter bursts out in an infectious way. Some tracks will be familiar, but there is a good mix of less well known material and some items totally new to CD. Several songs appear in different versions, both among the Crosby items and elsewhere, but there is sufficient variation in treatment to ensure that interest is not lost. Radio recordings as old as some of these have inevitable variation in audio quality and better versions exist for some. "The Way You Look Tonight", track 23 on CD B is rather poor and the early part of the song has been cut, possibly for quality reasons, but the value of the rarities far outweighs any such consideration. Those who have an interest in Judy as well as Bing are in for a special treat because although many of her best known recordings with other partners are included from film and record, there are many in different versions from radio. In my view a delightful issue.*

### David Bowie.

An 11 CD set of David Bowie "A New Career in a New Town-1982" includes the 1977 duet with Bing "Peace on Earth/Little Drummer Boy" in the complete version but there is a certain amount of adverse criticism on the "net" about the quality of the issue as a whole.

A CD "**Together Again**" with Alfie Boe and Michael Ball has been announced in which they appear to sing in a trio with Bing on "White Christmas". How many more? Can't modern artists sell records on their own merits?

Lastly among the CDs the item which I found the most exciting –

### Announcement from Bing Crosby Enterprises

On the day of the 40th anniversary of Bing's death it was announced that they will release two issues on December 8th 2017.

### New Tricks: 60th Anniversary Deluxe Edition (Original album, remastered) $10.98

1. Alabamy Bound / 2. When I Take My Sugar to Tea / 3. Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea / 4. Georgia on My Mind / 5. I'm Confessin' (That I Love You) / 6. If I Could Be With You / 7. Avalon / 8. Chinatown, My Chinatown / 9. You're Driving Me Crazy / 10. On the Alamo / 11. Chicago / 12. Softly, as in a Morning Sunrise.

Bonus Content:

13. Rain / 14. Church Bells / 15. I'll Remember Today / 16. My How the Time Goes By / 17. Chee Chee-oo Chee (Sang the Little Bird) / 18. Surprise / 19. All the Time / 20. Gigi / 21. Tammy / 22. Big D (with Lindsay Crosby) Take 2 / 23. Allegheny Moon (with Lindsay Crosby) / 24. More Than You Know.

*The first tracks were on the like-named LP and were issued on a well-engineered Japanese CD some years ago. They were also included on an EMI issue that added the tracks from "Some Fine Old Chestnuts", but both have been out of circulation for some time. All the other tracks are almost certainly from the recordings made with Buddy Cole for radio use in the 1950s and are fairly easily identifiable but I'm not going to stick my neck out too far in putting dates to them. By my count I think that nine are unissued on any official CD. An issue to look forward to, but personally I am more excited by the potential of the next item.*

**Among My Souvenirs: More Treasures from the Crosby Archive** **$19.98**

This is a 2-CD set announced as "a collection of 35 previously unissued recordings spanning Bing Crosby's entire career - - - made between 1932 and 1977, and includes outtakes, live recordings, and radio and television performances." The statement adds that there are a 1968 recording with Diana Ross and the Supremes, recently discovered concert recordings from 1956, and a track from Bing's final American concert in 1977.

Disc 1:

1. Please / 2. I'm Getting Sentimental over You / 3. The Day You Came Along / 4. Bing & Jack Oakie at Paramount / 5. Boo Boo Boo / 6. Roll Along Prairie Moon / 7. I've Been Floating Down the Old Green River / 8. Hello Hawaii / 9. When Irish Eyes Are Smiling / 10. You Forgot Your Gloves / 11. A Horse That Knows the Way Back Home / 12. She Is the Sunshine of Virginia / 13. What Do You Do in the Infantry? / 14. Good Morning Mr. Zip Zip Zip / 15. I've Told Every Little Star / 16. Oh, But I Do / 17. Minute Maid Radio Jingle (Extended Version) / 18. Alabamy Bound (with Lindsay Crosby)

Disc 2:

1. Be My Life's Companion / 2. Undecided / 3. Please Mr. Sun / 4. Moonlight and Roses (with Bob Crosby) / 5. Tell Me Why / 6. Dream a Little Dream of Me / 7. Eternally / 8. True Love / 9. In a Little Spanish Town / 10. I'm Confessin' (That I Love You) (tracks 8 – 10 recorded live at Fall River, 1955) / 11. Big D (with Lindsay Crosby) (Take 1) / 12. Old Cape Cod /13. The NATO Song / 14. Among My Souvenirs / 15. I Left My Heart in San Francisco / 16. Paint Your Wagon Medley: I'm on My Way/I Talk to the Trees/I Still See Elisa/They Call the Wind Maria (with Diana Ross and The Supremes) / 17. Send in the Clowns (Live at Concord Pavilion).

*This holds a great deal of promise for those in search of the new and undiscovered, and it clearly follows in the tracks of "So Rare: Treasures from the Crosby Archive" issued in 2010. I await it eagerly and I certainly am unable to guess at the origins of some of the titles. As I write listings have appeared on the Amazon sites in both the US and UK but as yet only the US site offers advance ordering.*

## VINYL

**Christmas Classics** **Capitol Records B0026983-01** US around $20, UK around £20.

1. White Christmas / 2. Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas / 3. Winter Wonderland / 4. What Child Is This?/The Holly and the Ivy (Medley) / 5. Little Drummer Boy / 6. O Holy Night / 7. The Littlest Angel / 8. Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! / 9. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing/It Came Upon a Midnight Clear (Medley) / 10. Frosty the Snowman / 11. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer / 12. I Wish You a Merry Christmas / 13. Do You Hear What I Hear? / 14. Pat-A-Pan/While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night (Medley) / 15. Christmas Dinner, Country Style / 16. Peace on Earth-Little Drummer Boy (with David Bowie)

*Greg Van Beek has noticed that Capitol Records have released a vinyl LP of "Christmas Classics", the equivalent of a CD issued in 2006 which was itself a reissue of an earlier CD but with remastered tracks. If you still like to spin vinyl this you might want this but it comes at a considerable premium over the CD. The audio quality from this source should be good.*

## DVDs and BLU-RAY

**Blu-ray**

**Road to Rio** **Kino Lorber** Around $16

Aspect ratio: 1.34:1 Region A. No extras.

**Road to Bali** **Kino Lorber** Around $16

Aspect ratio: 1.33:1 Region A. Added audio commentary by Film Historians Michael Schlesinger and Mark Evanier.

*These two "Road" films issued in digitally remastered versions on Blu-ray and I have had three very favourable reports about the quality of both the audio and video on "Bali" with particular emphasis on the deeply saturated colour, but slightly more reserved comment from one on the B&W of "Rio". The additional audio commentary on "Bali" does not seem to have impressed one correspondent. Although the Blu-ray Consortium website shows Region B versions I have been unable to find a supplier listing them, nor are versions listed by any of the popular European suppliers. At the time of writing Deep Discount are offering both titles together for $17.49 (and free shipping if you spend $25 or more).*

**The Jackie Gleason Show in Color** **Time Life** 9 DVDs $99:95

The issue includes the show from November 25, 1967 with Bing, Alan King, Liberace and Stan Ross. But be warned, Greg Van Beek tells me that Bing's solo of "Don't Fence Me In" remains, as does the final number "Thanks a Million". But "Dear Hearts and Gentle People", along with "San Fernando Valley" were cut, and the entire medley Bing sang with Jackie is gone as well. A great pity.

**Holiday Inn** is already available on Blu-ray but by the time you read this, Universal will have released a 75th anniversary edition on Blu-ray. It contains a bonus disc with the recent Broadway musical version.

## THE INTERNET

In my meanderings around the internet I have come across some out of the ordinary items offered on eBay which might interest readers. Some that particularly caught my attention were Bing's own annotated script for a 1969 Hollywood Palace TV show at a starting price of $3,250 and Bing's "gold" record of the "All Star Festival" LP from 1963, starting price $1,100. Lastly something that struck me as quite remarkable- an envelope addressed to Bing by a young (from the handwriting) British fan in 1943 with wartime censorship marks – just to establish that Bing was not an undercover enemy agent in receipt of classified information I suppose, at a starting price of AU$1,000.

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